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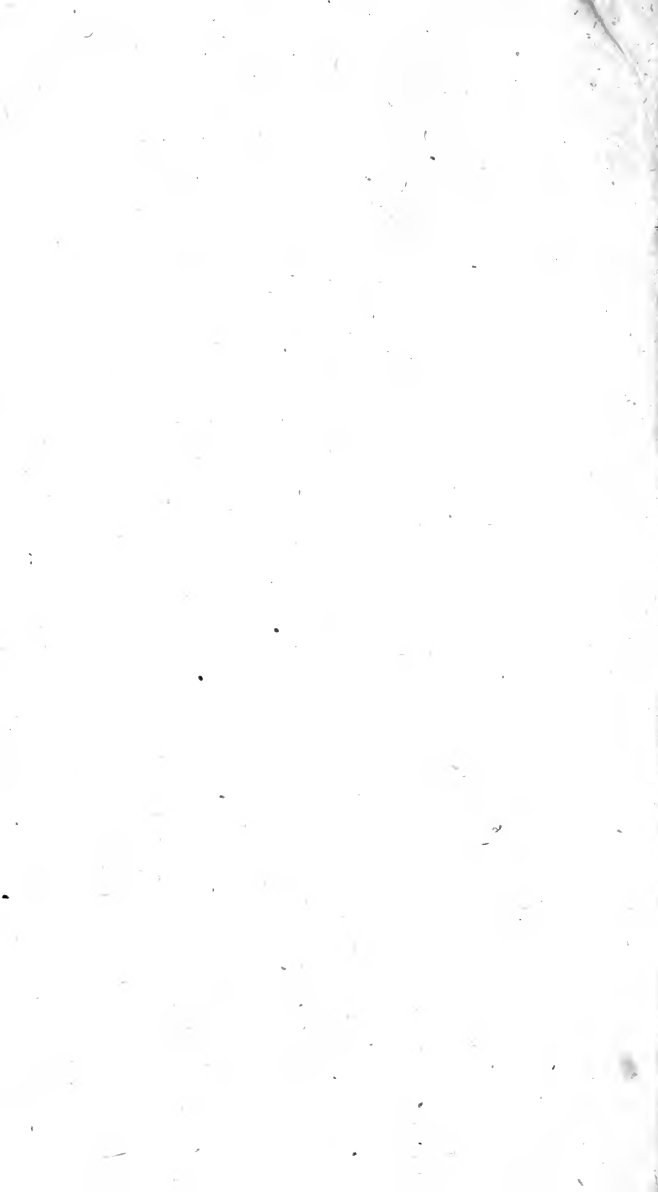
VIVONIO.



A ROMANCE.



LANZ, MINERVA PRESS, LEADENHALL-STREET.



VIVONIO;

OR,

THE HOUR OF RETRIBUTION.

A Romance.

IN FOUR VOLUMES.

BY

A YOUNG LADY.

Ask ye who hath done these deeds?

TASSO.

... ..
Even-handed Justice returns the poison'd chalice to our own lips.

SHAKESPEARE.

VOL. II.

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V I V O N I O.

CHAP. I.

THE morning repast was no sooner ended, than the amiable society at the Castle repaired to the library of the Marchese, where they were in general accustomed to pass the early part of the day. Father Albertini soon joined them, and Rosalia then commenced the promised narration.

The tears of her auditors flowed as she feelingly related the sufferings and anguish of the unfortunate Victoria; but nothing could exceed the astonishment and horror

felt by Albertini, on learning that his wife had died a victim to the persecutions of Don Felix de Romna, a name which, till this hour, he had never heard of. These feelings, however, yielded to the grateful emotions of his heart, as Rosalia detailed the generous friendship of the Countess; and when, with all the ardour of sisterly affection, she dwelt on the firmness with which Josephine had rejected the soft pleadings of Ferdinand, the looks of Albertini evinced the triumphant exultation of virtue, and he embraced his charming daughter with the delight and tenderness of parental love.

At the conclusion of the affecting detail, every one seemed eager to express the sentiments they felt for the amiable Countess Alvanio. They were not in the least surprised at the care she had taken to conceal from the Count the real origin of her young *protegee*, on understanding from Josephine, that her generous benefactress had

been influenced to the secrecy she had observed on the subject, by a fear of involving her Lord in any trouble that might ensue to herself, should a discovery of her kindness to the unhappy Victoria, and her offspring, take place.

Albertini was too deeply impressed with the recent recital, to quickly regain sufficient composure to enter on a detail of those circumstances of his life, which were unknown to his daughter. He, therefore, deferred the painful relation till the evening.

At the hour appointed the parties again assembled in the library; and Albertini, heaving the sigh of agonizing recollection, began his sad story as follows:—

“ At the time I became acquainted with Don Carlos, the brother of my Victoria, I was a student at the University of Salamanca. My parents were dead; I had no near relations; and had been consigned to the care of guardians, who paid very little

attention to my concerns. Had I been naturally disposed to vice, I possessed ample means of indulging in every excess. Fortunately my pensive temper inclined me to study and serious pursuits. Don Carlos was the first person who proved successful in drawing me from my recluse habits. He appeared to possess the most noble and generous sentiments: pride seemed his only fault, and that seldom displayed itself in our intercourse. We were on terms of the most intimate friendship, when I accompanied him to the Castle of Don Garzio.

“It is needless to repeat what occurred on that visit—Let it suffice, I returned to the University the happiest of human beings.

“Soon after my return, my society was assiduously sought by a young nobleman, called Don Julio Salvador. He had been but a short time at the University, and I was a stranger to his character or principles. His manners were interesting, and he was
generally

generally supposed to possess an excellent heart. Still, however, I associated but very rarely with him, and he usually intruded his company on me, when my friend Carlos was otherwise engaged.

“ One evening in the absence of Carlos, Don Julio, accompanied by Don Hernandez de Marino, then a fellow-student, and who was highly esteemed for the sweetness of his manners, and the propriety of his conduct, abruptly entered my apartment.

“ Julio and Hernandez immediately informed me, they had formed an intention to visit Zamora ;—their joint entreaties overcame my reluctance to be of the party, and at length I consented to accompany them. An anxious presentiment of trouble warned me, however, to decline this excursion ; but I rejected the friendly portent, and early the following morning set off. The day passed entirely to my satisfaction, and I frequently smiled at the recollection of the alarm I had felt at the idea of this excursion. The next

day was employed in viewing the delightful scenery which surrounds Zamora; and I sketched several charming landscapes, with an intention to present them to Victoria. Both Julio and Hernández were acquainted with my intended nuptials, and both effectually secured my esteem, by uttering the just praises of her whom I adored; for each had seen her on the celebration of Don Carlos's natal-day.

“We were just sitting down to supper, when Don Hernandez received an order from one of the superiors of the University, for him to hasten to Salamanca immediately; he refused the offers of Julio and myself to accompany him, and, promising to return the ensuing day, he departed, and I have not beheld him since that night.

On the following morning I accompanied Julio to view the remains of an ancient Moorish Castle, situated a short distance from Zamora. After surveying the most remarkable parts of the structure, he
led

led the way to the subterraneous passages. Here we wandered for some time, and at length encountered a tall, assassin-looking figure, who carried a lamp. The man glanced his eyes significantly on Julio, then opened the door of a dungeon, into which I was soon after thrown, covered with blood, flowing from the wounds I received, in endeavouring to resist the execution of the full design.

“ I had been scarcely a minute in the dungeon, when Julio and the man entered. The latter seized and held me, while the former forced me to swallow a liquid, which quickly stupified, and deprived me of all sense of my sufferings.

“ On the first dawn of recollection I found myself reclined on a heap of straw : The scenes of atrocious villainy that had passed, now occurred to memory. In horror I threw my eyes around the gloomy space, in which no gleam of light entered. I felt for my wounds, and, to my extreme astonishment, observed they were entirely
B 4 healed.

healed. By this circumstance I was convinced that I must have been, for a considerable time, deranged in intellect, as it was impossible I could have recovered from the effects of the ill usage I had received, in a few hours.

“ I vain I sought, in a review of former times, for an elucidation of my present mysterious confinement. The most reasonable conjecture was, that Julio had conceived a deadly prejudice against me, and had had recourse to this shocking procedure, to gratify his unjust hatred.

“ I had lain about an hour, reflecting on the inexplicable circumstance in which I was involved, when the door of the dungeon opened, and the gaunt figure, who had assisted the vile machinations of Julio, entered, with a small portion of bread, and an equally slender quantity of sour wine. Having placed the lamp he carried on the ground, he handed me the wretched sustenance; but judge of my astonishment and indignation, when, on addressing this
savage,

savage, he instantly caught up a chain, and feeble and emaciated as I then was, soon fastened me to the ground.

“The object of my unavailing rage had no sooner closed the door of my dark abode, than I repented of having betrayed a glimpse of reason, as it now appeared evident that while under mental derangement, I had been melancholy and passive; otherwise my tormentor had not chained me down, the moment he perceived I had recovered my reason.

“Revolving this circumstance, I determined to effect a return of my disorder, and watch an opportunity of escaping. My design succeeded. My jailer, imagining that his harsh treatment had again deranged my intellects, at length released me from my chain.

“I will not weary you with detailing the artifices I was compelled to have recourse to. Suffice it, I contrived to remove some loose stones from a part of the wall of the dungeon, which was in a state

of decay, and at last had the happiness to effect my escape.

“The night was clear and serene. Regained liberty and revived hope, imparted strength to my enfeebled frame; and I pursued my way to Zamora, indulging in the most delightful visions of future happiness.

“At Zamora I immediately procured mules, and, at length, faint and weary, reached Salamanca. Here my wretched appearance rendered me unknown, and with some difficulty, I obtained an interview with Father Jerome, one of the superiors of the University. He listened to my strange recital with amazement and horror, and treated me with the utmost humanity.

“To my several anxious enquiries the superior declined giving answers, until I had taken refreshment and repose.

“The considerative friendship of Father Jerome retarded, for a short time, the dreadful tale I was to hear. At this late period I cannot recollect the agonies I en-

dured, at the terrible accounts I received, without shuddering. From the Father I learned that I had been absent near a year, that my friend Don Carlos had renounced me, and that my Victoria, my beloved, my destined bride, impressed with the shocking idea of my being an abandoned libertine, had retired to a convent, and suddenly taken the veil.

“ My grief, rage and despair, knew no bounds. I traversed miles in search of the vile Julio, who, I understood, was at Madrid; but he eluded my vengeance, and at length embarked for America: even there I would have pursued him, could I have discovered to what part of the new world he had directed his course. Don Hernandez, of whose principles of justice and honour I entertained the highest opinion, would undoubtedly have assisted the researches I made after the execrable Julio, had he been either at Salamanca or Madrid, but it so happened that he was then gone to a distant part of Spain.

“Disappointed of my just revenge, and overwhelmed with the deepest despair, I retired to a solitary mansion on one of my own estates, where, for several weeks, I shut myself up to indulge the anguish of my soul.

“My days were passed in gloomy silence and solitude, and if, at night, my weary eye-lids closed, the image of Victoria, pale and broken-hearted, haunted my imagination !

“At length this state became insupportable, and, to sooth my tortured mind, I yielded to an illusion too pleasing to be withstood, and too dangerously flattering. The idea of carrying off my Victoria from her convent, I at first repressed with horror ; but, by degrees, my repugnance to the step abated, and my heart was but too much inclined to approve what conscience had before opposed. My heated fancy represented the sacred vows of Victoria by no means binding, as her faith had been first plighted to me ; and I too soon came
to

to a determination of seducing her, if possible, from her pious retreat.

“Informing my household I intended to travel, and having previously drawn for large sums of money, and collected a quantity of valuable jewels, I departed, unattended, from the rich domains of my ancestors.”

Albertini paused—A tear of penitence stole from his downcast eye, and his attentive auditors had too much respect for his feelings to interrupt his sorrow.

At length he continued—

“Do not expect, my valued friends, that I can attempt to detail the means I used to obtain an interview with my beloved Victoria. I gained admission to the convent, and surprised her at the foot of a small altar, where she was offering up devout prayer for the conversion of him who was on the point of ruining her peace. By the most artful sophistry I taught her to think, for a moment, that her religious vows were not obligatory, and I seized
that

that opportunity to bear her triumphantly away from the sacred abode of religion and innocence.

“The darkness of the night aided our escape, and we were many miles from the convent before the morning dawned.

“Intent on my plan, I had provided every thing requisite for its completion. Victoria assumed the plain garb of a peasant girl; I equipped myself in a rustic style also; and under this homely disguise we travelled through Old Castile, crossed the Ebro, and passed through Arrogan, from whence we proceeded near fifty leagues by the foot of the Pyrenees, and at length reached a pleasant small village, where we determined to fix our residence. A priest was soon found, who united our hands; and we were quickly in possession of a small cottage, surrounded by plantations of olives, in the midst of a fertile valley, about twelve leagues from Urgel.

“In this homely habitation, under the influence of the most ardent and reciprocal affection,

affection, I passed two years of exquisite felicity. About a year after our arrival in this delightful valley, you, my Josephine, was born, and your birth added to a happiness which I believed perfect.

“ During the first period of our child’s infancy, our bliss suffered no abatement ; but when the smiling cherub, with all the endearing sweetness of filial love, uttered the names of her parents, then I experienced many a bitter pang. The lovely pledge of our affection was doomed, by the peculiarly unfortunate circumstances of her parents, to fill a lowly station, when her noble birth might have entitled her to associate and vie with the proudest daughters of Spain.

“ I soon discovered that my adored wife was equally affected by this consideration ; and moreover, that a keen remorse, at the breach of her religious vows, secretly preyed upon her health.

“ Our little Josephine was about two years old, when, one day, as we were all seated.

seated under the shady trees, before our neat dwelling, partaking a frugal repast, a stranger approached, and making a sudden stop, gazed intently on my wife, then uttered an exclamation of surprise, and was out of sight before I had power to articulate a word.

“ This occurrence filled me with the utmost alarm, and the most poignant dread. Fortunately my Victoria had not observed the man, her attention being at the time engaged by the child; and I felt too much fear of destroying the little ease she enjoyed, to mention the circumstance to her. However, I resolved to remove from our present abode, and retire to some part of France.

“ Some time after this event, I received a small billet, by the hand of a peasant, who said a stranger had requested him to deliver it into my own hands. The contents of this billet informed me that my retreat had been discovered, and that I might soon expect a visit from some of the
agents

agents of the Holy Office. The writer professed himself a friend, who was actuated, by the most humane and disinterested motives, to warn me of my danger, and advise me to fly from impending ruin. He added, that if I should be inclined to profit by his hints, I might, perhaps, find a secure retreat in the Pyrenean mountains, near Cape Creuse, on the Mediterranean.

“ This letter threw me into the most violent perturbation, and I was obliged to conceal myself at some distance from my cottage, in order to avoid the observation of Victoria, and to determine on what course I should pursue.

“ The advice of my unknown friend confirmed the intention I had previously formed. I was confident there was no need of artifice to betray me and my wife into the power of the Inquisition, and, therefore, could not suspect him of any treacherous design. That our retreat had been discovered, the billet I had received rendered an indubitable truth; and we were every
moment

moment liable to be seized and carried before the Tribunal, whose sentence I had such just cause to dread. There was no time for deliberation, and I resolved to follow the counsel of my unknown adviser with all possible speed.

“ I returned to the cottage, and, with caution, signified to my beloved Victoria, the necessity of our immediate flight, in which she acquiesced with meek sorrow.

“ I durst not attempt to dispose of the cottage, as such a step would have excited suspicion, and might have been the means of prolonging our stay till it was too late to escape.

“ Victoria collected a few changes of dress, and having secured all our gold and jewels, we mounted our mules at midnight, and fled with our infant from the peaceful scene of our happiest hours.

“ We travelled till day-light, and then secreted ourselves in a thick wood, till the approach of evening, when we recommenced our journey. We had provided ourselves

ourselves with provisions, and as we partook the frugal repast, a faint gleam of hope would sometimes brighten our distant prospects.

“ The weather was extremely fine, and we generally slept in the shelter of some lone forest, carefully avoiding all villages and inhabited mansions.

“ For many days we continued our wearying journey ; and at length drew nigh to the shores of the Mediterranean. Night came on as we were proceeding through a vast forest of pines, and having found a convenient spot, we alighted, and prepared to pass the night in these unfrequented shades.

“ We had just finished a slight repast, when my Victoria tremblingly whispered me, that she had observed lights glimmering through the distant trees. I turned my eyes to where she directed, and beheld the alarming sight. The objects of our mutual terror hastily advanced towards the place where we were seated. Arising softly,

we

we prepared to seek a more remote spot, when the child, alarmed, I imagine, with the glare of the approaching torches, uttered a loud cry. Oh! shall I ever cease to remember that dreadful moment?—My Victoria rushed into my arms. The lights were hastily extinguished, and a shrill whistle pierced my ears. Victoria fainted on my bosom, and the affrighted infant fell from her arms.”

Albertini arose, and paced the room in extreme agitation. The filial solicitude of his lovely daughter, who sought, with impressive tenderness, to calm the mind of her revered parent, at length restored him to apparent composure, and he proceeded with his melancholy relation:—

“Supporting my Victoria with one arm, I essayed to raise my infant from the damp earth, and at that moment received a violent blow on my head, which felled me to the ground.

“When I recovered I found myself laid on a pallet, in a miserable hut. An aged
man

man was applying remedies to my head, which was severely wounded. Starting from the wretched bed, I called loudly on the name of Victoria, and rushed from the cot.

“ Faint streaks of light began to illumine the eastern sky, and served to display to my aching eyes the calm bosom of the ocean. The cottage I had left was situated on a lone cliff, overhanging the beach, while from its front were seen gloomy and extensive forests of fir and pine.

“ I gazed wildly around; then climbed the craggy heights, and plunged into the dark recesses of the forest. Here my voice sounded loudly on the light breeze. In vain I called on my Victoria and my child! —I heard no sound, but that of the wind rustling through the heavy branches of the fir; nor beheld any object, save the frightened chamois flying from the mossy rocks on my approach.

“ Forlorn and distracted, I wandered through the labyrinths of the vast forest,
until

until the dark vapours of night enveloped me, and the closely-entwined shrubs mocked my efforts to proceed. Sunk in the deepest despair, I threw myself at the foot of a tree ; and in the listless stupor of overcharged woe, lay awaiting the return of day.

“ A faint light glimmering, at intervals, between the trees, roused me from my chilling couch. The light approached, and I presently heard a feeble voice hallooing.

“ I endeavoured to force my way through the thick underwood, and in a few minutes encountered the aged man, whose cottage I had fled from.

“ The light he carried shone full on his face, and as the wind blew aside his silver locks, I could not avoid being struck with the meek and benevolent expression of his venerable countenance. My wild and desponding air, and my garments stained with the blood which had flowed from the wound I would not permit to be bound up,

up, rendered me so shocking a spectacle, that the old man doubted my being the person he sought.

“ Convinced, however, in a short time, of the identity of the distracted being, in search of whom he had wandered, he made use of the most earnest entreaties to induce me to return to his cottage, promising also to accompany me the next day through the forest, and to make every possible enquiry after the females I so much lamented.

“ On these conditions I yielded to his importunities, and returned with him to his hospitable dwelling.

“ Here Anselmo, for I afterwards understood that was his name, prevailed on me to suffer my wound to be dressed, which being done, he, with much difficulty, caused me to take a small quantity of wine, and to lay down on the pallet, where I quickly fell into a profound sleep, for which I was indebted, as I soon afterwards understood, to my kind host, who had
mixed

mixed an opiate with the wine I had drank.

“When I awoke I observed, to my surprise, that the sun was just setting. Anselmo sat by the bedside, near which was placed a small table, spread with fruits, a few cakes, and some wine.

“On my expressing great uneasiness at having slept so many hours, the principal part of which I had intended to employ in search of my lost wife and child, the good man informed me he had been making every possible enquiry since the break of day, but could obtain no intelligence of them ; adding, that he hoped the following day would turn out more successful, as he had commissioned, he said, two honest peasants, who were well acquainted with the country, to make minute enquiries for many miles round.

“To this information the humane Anselmo added such excellent lectures, on the impiety and folly of yielding to impatience and despair, that my harrassed mind gradu-

gradually became more calm ; and, at length, I forced myself to partake of the repast he had so generously provided.

“ While we were thus employed, I enquired by what or whose means I had first become an inmate of his cottage ? In answer he informed me, that while at prayer, he was interrupted by several loud knocks at the door ; and having opened it, was greatly surprised at finding no person there. The night, he observed, was very dark, and imagining that some benighted wanderer, while thus seeking shelter, had been suddenly taken ill, he fetched the lamp, and beheld me laying senseless near the threshold. He conveyed me, as well as he was able, into the cot ; but all his attempts to place me on the pallet were in vain ; he was, therefore, reduced to the necessity of laying the pallet on the floor, and then succeeded in drawing me on it. He was just preparing, he added, to dress my wound, when I recovered and fled from the cottage.

“ The good old man, whose bosom glowed with the tenderest feelings of humanity, farther informed me, that on my sudden flight, he furnished himself with some provisions, and a lanthorn, with which he set off, in search of the poor forlorn stranger; determining to continue his pursuit during the day, and succeeding night, if he did not find me in the interval. As he proceeded, he thrice caught sight of me, but was each time at too great distance to be heard, though he exerted his voice to the utmost. Darkness came on;— he kindled his light, and was still in pursuit of me, when I advanced and met him.

“ I returned my venerable humane host the most grateful thanks for his kind attentions, and offered him a purse of ducats, which had been so carefully concealed, that the villains who attacked me in the forest had not discovered it.

“ Anselmo positively rejected the gold. He seemed hurt at the offer, but did not cease his benevolent offices.

“ The

“ The generous, humane disposition, manifested by Anselmo, quickly secured my esteem. I judged him to be worthy of my confidence, and accordingly entrusted him with some particulars of my life. When I had concluded, the good old man, who had listened with mute attention, expressed the tenderest compassion for my singular misfortunes ; then represented, so forcibly, the danger of my venturing to accompany him in his researches, and also the fatal consequences, in which, by such imprudent conduct, I might involve Victoria, that I consented to remain concealed in the cottage till his return.

“ At the first dawn of light, the good Anselmo departed. Oh ! what a day of agonizing suspense I passed ! The night was far advanced, and my venerable friend had not returned. At length the little door opened, and he entered. His feeble dejected air—the expression of silent sorrow, on his pallid countenance, struck on my
c 2 heart.

heart. 'She is lost ! for ever lost !' I exclaimed, and fell senseless on the floor.

"When my senses returned, I raised my eyes to the face of Anselmo. Compassion and grief were mingled in his mild aspect.

"My despair now assumed the appearance of composure ; and in a voice of apparent calmness, I entreated the good old man to acquaint me with all he had heard relative to my wife and child.

"With a sensation not unlike peevish impatience, I heard the preparatory exhortation to resignation, fall from the lips of my venerable friend. I requested him to put an end to my suspense. With looks of deep concern, he replied,—'I fear—it would be of no avail to indulge hope.'

'Proceed—Let me hear all—You see I am perfectly composed,' said I, while a heavy weight seemed to press on my heated brain!

"Anselmo saw into the real state of my
mind;

mind ; and concluding that to know even the worst, would be more supportable than the agonies I then endured, he related, that at the first approach of dawn, on the preceding day, several peasants proceeding along the coast, to their daily toil, beheld a boat push out from a small creek ; the rowers in which plied with all their strength, to gain a small brigantine, which lay at some distance. Partly screened from notice by the projecting rocks, the peasants stood to observe the boat, and perceived in it a young woman, and a child, who appeared to be of the same sex : the former lay apparently lifeless, in the arms of a man, who sat near the stern, while the latter was held by another.

“ In a few minutes the boat was hid from their view, by its turning a point of the land ; and the peasants pursued their way with all imaginable haste, not doubting but that the vessel belonged to pirates. In the evening, one of the peasants returning home the same way, found these habili-

ments washed ashore ; and, continued Anselmo, there is reason to fear that the brigantine foundered, as several pieces of a wreck were discovered, at the same time, amongst the rocks.

“ While speaking, Anselmo displayed to my wild gaze some garments belonging to my Victoria and our child. Mechanically I took the articles from his hands, then, in a paroxysm of frenzy, darted out of the cottage. I flew with rapid steps to the beach, and plunged into the foaming waves. Several fishermen, whom, in my delirious haste, I had not noticed, were mending their nets on the rocks ; they, perceiving my mad intent, immediately pursued, and providentially saved me from the commission of suicide.

“ The vicinity of Anselmo’s cot suggested to the fishermen the expedient of conveying me thither. On the cliff they were met by the terrified old man, and quickly after they replaced me under his benevolent protection.

“ A violent

“ A violent fever ensued, which reduced me to the brink of the grave. However, it pleased the Divine Power to prolong my existence, and I slowly recovered.

“ A deep melancholy had now taken possession of my mind, and for some time I was regardless of the pious exhortations of my venerable friend. At length, the good Anselmo ventured to speak of my lost Victoria : by degrees he led me to expatiate on her virtues, and our past happiness. Together we wept her disastrous fate, and that of my beloved child. Days and weeks passed in conversing on this mournful subject. My Victoria and our lovely infant were the only themes on which I uttered a word.

“ Anselmo had now my entire confidence ; and, one evening, I related to him those particulars of my story which hitherto I had concealed. To the dreaded pursuit of the Inquisition, I had before assigned only a common cause ; but now I communicated the real one, after having

given him a full detail of the cruel injuries I had sustained from the base Julio. Tears wetted his aged cheek as I recounted the tale of my wrongs; but I perceived he shuddered when I revealed to him the impious rashness of my ungoverned passion; and he did not hesitate to declare that he looked on the awful fate of my Victoria and my infant, as divine chastisement for my crime and her broken vows.

“ His discourse made a deep impression on my mind; and, by constant lessons of wholesome advice, he at length wrought so entire a change therein, that I resolved to devote the remainder of my days to penitence and prayer.

“ To the pious and fervent zeal of that excellent man, I owe the first ray of comfort, which at that period dawned on my gloomy mind. Anselmo, to an acute understanding, joined an excellent heart. He had experienced the vicissitudes of life, and had sought for tranquillity, where he deemed it the most likely to be found, in
solitary

solitary retirement. He highly approved of my design to embrace a monastic life, and advised me to seek refuge in a convent in Italy.

“ Long before we parted, he communicated to me the principal circumstances of his life. Descended from a respectable line of ancestry, and possessed of an ample fortune, he had, while young, enjoyed all the visionary sweets the latter could procure, without suffering his mind to be tainted by the vices or follies of the gay world. The infidelity, however, of a beautiful young female, whom he passionately loved, and to whom he was on the point of being indissolubly united, disgusted him with society ; and yielding to the impulses of a disordered mind, he fled to the wild forests of the Pyrenees ; and, shortly after, fixed his abode in the lone cottage on the cliff, where, supported by the charitable benefactions of a convent, some miles distant from his humble residence, he was gently declining to the grave, with

a mind freed from earthly cares, and elevated by a religious hope of future happiness.

“ Having formed the determination of taking the sacred vows, I continued but a short time after in Spain. But little did I imagine, when I bade adieu to my native land, that my Victoria yet lived—lived, the persecuted victim of a villain!—When I reflect upon the scroll found in the casket, I am bewildered by a thousand perplexing ideas. From my earliest recollection, I never heard of such a person as Don Felix de Romna; and I am often inclined to believe that it was my cruel enemy, Julio, who assumed that name, the better to deceive and ensnare the hapless Victoria. Again, I recollect that all his estates were situated in Andalusia; yet still I cannot banish the idea of his being the persecutor of my wife. But were I to discover that to be really the case, and were the base man to stand confessed before me, my sacred order prohibits the desire of vengeance; and the

the divine precepts of religion would enjoin me to extend to him that forgiveness, by which I am to hope I might purchase my pardon for equal enormities."

After pausing awhile, Albertini resumed his discourse.

"I must acknowledge I feel an anxious wish to peruse the scroll, of which I have as yet been favoured with only a summary account. You, my generous friends, feared, no doubt, to wound my heart, by a full detail of my lost Victoria's sufferings. But what pangs can exceed those I have felt for years! Remorse and sorrow have preyed on my mind, from the hour in which I was deprived of an adored wife. While I beheld her, I was insensible to the impiety of the means I had used to obtain her; but in the still hour of seclusion and penitence, the pale form of the deluded Victoria haunted my agonized mind, and seemed mournfully to upbraid me with the cruel sophistry, with which I urged
c 6 her

her to fly from the sacred altar, and profane her vows. Can it then be supposed that the wretch, who for years has bent beneath the heavy lash of conscience, and, with unceasing tears, acknowledged the justice of the Divine decree, would, at this moment, when indulgent Heaven speaks pardon and peace, in the restoration of a lamented child, ungratefully reject the blessing, by yielding to unavailing regrets? No, my Victoria is no more; and with humble gratitude I thank the beneficent Author of her being, for calling her from this world of woe, when, had she remained in it, self-condemnation must have embittered every hour of her life."

The tears of Albertini wetted his pallid cheek, as from his penitent heart he breathed the devout declaration of humble submission to the will of his Creator.

An affecting pause ensued. The griefs of the unhappy Alphonso, whom we shall continue to call Albertini, at the early privation

vation of a beloved wife, too forcibly reminded the Marchese of his own loss, and bitter remembrance agitated his bosom. The Duke well defined the feelings of Di Romanzini, and sighed as he reflected on the instability of human happiness. Rosalia and Josephine, unconscious of the cause which encreased the expression of sorrow on the features of the Duke and Marchese, attributed their dejection to the sympathy which they all had experienced in the misfortunes of Albertini. But the Father almost immediately comprehended the full extent of his noble friends feelings, and endeavoured to dissipate their regrets, by leading the conversation to the generous conduct of the Countess Alvanio.

“The Countess has promised,” said the Marchese, “to favour us with a visit, immediately after the departure of Don Hernandez de Marino, whose stay at Naples, I am informed, will not be of long continuance. He is a most accomplished noble-

3 man,

man, and I should have been happy to have entertained him at Orenza, but he politely rejected my invitation. At present I am disposed to be pleased with his refusal to accompany the Countess ; for as that lady has never mentioned the concerns of her fair *protégée* to her relative, I should imagine that a secret motive determined her silence to him also, and consequently it would be prudent not to suffer the recent discovery to reach his knowledge."

"I am perfectly of your opinion, my dear Marchese," replied Albertini.

"As that is the case," said the Marchese, "I will not write to the Countess, until I shall have learned that Don Hernandez has departed for Spain. To-morrow," added he, "my Rosalia shall visit Santa Maria, whither your daughter, if you approve the step, shall accompany her. In that sacred asylum she will be less exposed to observation, than in the castle.

"Is it possible, my Lord," returned Albertini,

bertini, "you can doubt my acquiescence? —the considerative kindness and strict propriety of your proposition are unquestionable."

The prudent measure proposed by the Marchese being approved of by the Duke, Rosalia and Josephine withdrew. The three noble friends continued together till supper time, engaged in forming plans for procuring from the court of Rome the pardon of Albertini, and the restoration of his forfeited estates.

Rosalia and Josephine joined the party to supper; and as the moment of separating for the night approached, Albertini, with a mournful air, regarded his amiable daughter, whose expressive countenance indicated sorrow at being compelled, by circumstances, to quit a parent so lately found, and already so truly revered.

Each ardently wished to soothe the apparent uneasiness of the other, unobserved even by the eye of friendship; but
the

the peculiarity of their respective situations precluded even the hope of a private interview, and Josephine was obliged to console herself with a promise of soon seeing her beloved father at the convent, where he was in the habit of visiting the Abbess Santa Clara.

CHAP. II.

EARLY the following morning, Rosalia and Josephine, accompanied by the Marchese, set off for the Convent of Santa Maria. The heart of Josephine beat as she beheld the grey tower of the convent church, whose painted window displayed its pleasing variety of colours, brilliant with the morning sun-beams.

As Rosalia sprung from the carriage, and entered the spacious court of the convent, the ancient portress uttered a faint cry of joy, then hurried her feeble steps to announce the approach of the lovely visitant to the Lady Abbess, who immediately advanced

vanced to meet her beloved grand-niece, whom she welcomed with the tenderest affection.

In a few minutes the companions of her youth, with joyful eagerness, thronged around Rosalia, who, with looks of grateful affection, answered their enquiries; then informed the Abbess, that the Marchese waited in the parlour.

Santa Clara, followed by Rosalia, immediately proceeded thither, and welcomed the Marchese with animated expressions of pleasure. But what were the emotions of Josephine, when the venerable Lady advanced towards her, and, with the smile of benignity, informed her that she was an expected guest.—“Your friend, the amiable Countess Alvanio,” continued the Abbess, “acquainted me with her intention of placing you under my protection; and believe me, Signora Josephine, I sincerely rejoice in this proof of that lady’s esteem for me: and I feel peculiarly pleased in being favoured with the
society

society of so amiable a young lady, as the Countess has represented her admirable *protégée*. To your virtues I am no stranger, and it shall be my study to render your residence with me as agreeable as it possibly can be to one, who undoubtedly regrets the loss of her inestimable friend's society."

Josephine curtsied respectfully, and essayed to speak her acknowledgments; but the emotions of her heart rendered her voice inarticulate, and her tears only told the grateful sense she entertained of the kind reception given her by Santa Clara.

"Weep not, my child," said the venerable Abbess; "for though these tears do honour to your heart, yet I feel pained at your sensibility. Affliction is the lot of human nature; there is no real happiness, but that of consoling the unfortunate. Rest assured of my friendship and protection; and, above all, depend on that Power who *chastens* but in *love*, and who *corrects* but in *mercy*. Your companions,"
added

added she, addressing Rosalia, “are, I imagine, impatient at your delay. Introduce to their friendship Signora Josephine, whose melancholy will, I hope, be dissipated, by the attentions which the sisterhood will think it a pleasure to pay the friend of my beloved niece.”

The young friends immediately withdrew, and joined the nuns, who, if they regarded Josephine with curiosity, amply compensated for the scrutiny with which they viewed her, by the kindness and gentleness of their manners.

When alone with Santa Clara, the Marchese mentioned his suspicions respecting the dejection and apparent tincture of caprice which had marked the conduct of Rosalia, on her quitting the villa Alvanio.

The Abbess, after silently musing for a few minutes, said—

“On condition you do not abruptly reveal to Rosalia the knowledge of the secret confided to me, I will give to you a letter which I received a few days since from the
Countess

Countess Alvania. The contents will inform you of the cause of the uneasiness you observed in your daughter."

"I promise," hastily returned the agitated Marchese.—"Is it possible!—Can the ingenuous bosom of Rosalia harbour a thought she is desirous to conceal from the knowledge of her parents?"

"Judge not rashly," said Santa Clara, mildly. "When you have perused this epistle," added she, presenting a folded paper to the Marchese, "you will do justice to the silence which delicacy and filial respect imposes on our Rosalia. Restrain your impatience," perceiving Di Romanzini eager to examine the contents of the letter; "defer the perusal till you return to the castle; and when even there, read it only in your own closet. If you please we will instantly separate. You are, doubtless, anxious to read the epistle, and not perfectly at ease with respect to its purport, in which disposition it were best not to take leave of Rosalia."

The

The Marchese immediately availed himself of the advice of Santa Clara, and departed from the convent, without bidding adieu to his daughter, who, though extremely surprised at his precipitate retreat, readily admitted the excuses alledged by the Abbess, who intimated to her that the Marchese had returned on private concerns to the castle, and that he had avoided saying farewell, lest, by so doing, he should disturb her serenity, especially as he could not promise to revisit the convent, until the expiration of the two following days.

In honour of Rosalia's return, the remainder of the day was dedicated to innocent festivity. Josephine became charmed with the mild dignity of Santa Clara, and the friendly unity which reigned throughout the amiable sisterhood.

The Marchese, on his return, was met at the gate of the castle by Father Albertini, whose anxious enquiries, relative to the reception of his daughter, at Santa
Maria,

Maria, were answered by the former, in a manner that afforded him the highest satisfaction.

Impatient to read the letter the Abbess had confided to him, the Marchese, the moment he could disengage himself from the Duke and Albertini, hastened to his cabinet: There, with much agitation, he opened the important paper, and quickly learned from its contents the mutual affection of Guidoni and Rosalia.

The Countess, intending her letter for the perusal of her friend Santa Clara only, had represented the artless affection of the lovers in the most interesting manner; and the Marchese, while he regretted having exposed his idolized child to the attentions of one so amiable and accomplished as the Count Guidoni, could not feel displeased with the distinction shewn by Rosalia, to an admirer so worthy of her regard as the Count. The motives which had urged the flight of Guidoni, were also explained in this affecting letter. Ferdi-
nand

nand having communicated to his mother the information given him, by the Count Alvania, of his friends having withdrawn himself from Gaita, solely in consequence of having been made acquainted with the intention of the Marchese to bestow the hand of Rosalia upon her cousin.

After relating these particulars, the Countess had indulged herself in expatiating on the disinterested and generous conduct of Guidoni, who, though adoring Rosalia, had fled her society, the moment he understood the wishes of her friends.

The Marchese read the just praises of Guidoni with the liveliest satisfaction. While at Naples, he had been extremely pleased with the noble principles and engaging manners of the young Count; and the delicate respect he had observed in not soliciting the affections of Rosalia, now raised him considerably in the esteem of the Marchese.

The late Count Guidoni had been well known to Di Romanzini, as a nobleman
whose

whose virtues and talents had ever rendered him beloved and esteemed, and with whom he became intimately acquainted a considerable time prior to the Count's quitting Turin, and retiring to the Castle of Guidoni. From that period they had never met; and the recluse habits which the late Count had adopted, and the subsequent misfortunes of the Marchese, had prevented any correspondence between them.

When the Marchese had finished perusing the letter, he felt himself extremely embarrassed by the reflection, that, although he entertained not the slightest objection to the young Count, yet his precipitate departure from Gaita, and the uncertainty of his revisiting Naples, while in any degree attached to Rosalia, would not allow of any hope of accomplishing a union between him and his lovely daughter, who, the Marchese was now assured, regarded the Count with an affection, which, as it had virtue and sentiment for its basis, promised

mised to end but with life: she might therefore be condemned to linger out months—nay, years, in unceasing and silent regret.

The conduct of the Count Alvania, though delicately mentioned by the Countess in her letter, appeared to the Marchese insidious and contemptible, and he felt himself almost inclined to write, and reproach him with his unworthy dissimulation; but this idea did not long possess the mind of the Marchese, his friendship for Alvania revived, and listening to the suggestions of *that*, he concluded that the Count had only been mistaken in his representations to Guidoni, by having flattered himself into an opinion that Ferdinand and Rosalia were really as mutually attached to each other as he wished them to be; and as the Countess had by no means hinted that her Lord was sensible of the indifference of the cousins, the Marchese would have considered himself extremely unjust, had he harboured resentment

ment against the Count, for an involuntary error. But though the Marchese fully acquitted the Count Alvania of any designing falsehood, he could not forbear lamenting that his misrepresentations had driven the amiable Guidoni, in despair, from the villa; and he became exceedingly perplexed, while reflecting that there existed no means he could, with propriety, adopt, of recalling the Count, should the place of his present residence be ascertained.

Weary with forming various plans for promoting the happiness of his Rosalia, the Marchese, at length, came to the resolution of concealing from his daughter the knowledge he had gained of the state of her heart, until some fortunate moment should enable him to discover whether Guidoni retained the same tender sentiments for her, and whither he had flown to on his quitting the villa. Towards the Duke, the Marchese also determined to maintain a rigid silence on the subject.

CHAP. III.

ON the third day the Marchese again visited at the convent, and the good Abbess had the satisfaction of finding that he by no means disapproved of the innocent predilection of Rosalia ; but they both agreed it would be imprudent to sanction her affection, while ignorant of the present sentiments of Guidoni, and equally so of his immediate abode. Both of these particulars Santa Clara proposed endeavouring to ascertain, by addressing the Countess, and requesting her to make enquiries respecting the Count Guidoni, as it was more than probable that Ferdinand had renewed

renewed his correspondence with a friend so truly esteemed.

Could the Marchese or Santa Clara have suspected that Rosalia had already been informed that Ferdinand had written to Guidoni, and that the latter was supposed to be then secluded from society in his Alpine Castle, how joyfully would they have received this intelligence ! but unapprised of either circumstance, and justly dreading to create hopes of happiness, which might never be realized, each determined not to mention the subject that then employed their thoughts to the lovely object of their tenderest cares.

As the proposition made by Santa Clara suggested the most likely means of accomplishing the present plan, the Marchese immediately assented to her addressing the Countess Alvanio on the interesting subject.

This matter being determined, the Abbess directed a lay-sister to inform Signora Rosalia, that the Marchese desired her

presence ; and, shortly after, the lovely girl flew to the embrace of her affectionate parent.

A month from this period had elapsed, without being marked by any material event, when Rosalia was recalled from the convent, to receive the Countess Alvanio, whose arrival at the castle was daily expected.

The Marchese had lately received a letter from that lady, in which she informed him that Don Hernandez was on the point of departing for Spain, and therefore she could promise to visit Orenza in a few days.

To the extreme surprise of Santa Clara, she had received no answer to the letter of enquiry she had written to the Countess. The intelligence, however, which the former now received of the expected arrival of the latter, lessened her concern, and gave her hopes that when that circumstance should take place, she might probably gain the desired information.

Rosalia, with regret, quitted Josephine,
who

who could not accompany her friend to Orenza. On the following day the Countess arrived, and was highly gratified by the heartfelt warmth of friendship that marked her reception.

The Countess was not surprised at Josephine's being absent on this occasion, as she had not mentioned, in her letter to the Marchese, any probability of her visiting Orenza, unaccompanied by the Count Alvanio and Ferdinand.

On the Marchese expressing his surprise at seeing her alone, the Countess replied—

“The Count and my son have accompanied Don Hernandez to Rome, where an unexpected circumstance obliged him to go a few days after you left the villa. The time of my Lord's and Ferdinand's return is at present uncertain ; but I expect to hear from the Count in a few days, when I imagine I shall be apprised of their full intentions.”

The Countess had scarcely ceased speak-

ing, when Father Albertini, unconscious of her arrival, entered the apartment. Unacquainted with the person of the Countess, he would have withdrawn; the Marchese, however, prevented his retiring, by immediately introducing him to that lady. Albertini, much agitated, received the compliments of the Countess, who, seeing in the good Father only the preceptor of her son, was profuse in polite and friendly acknowledgments, for the unexampled and disinterested care he had evinced in cultivating the mind of Ferdinand.

The expressive features of Albertini were, at first, shaded by the cowl of his habit, which, on being seated, he threw back. The Countess now changed colour, and her eyes involuntarily became fixed on the pale countenance of the Father.

“Your eyes do not deceive you, lady,” said Albertini, who had remarked her scrutinizing gaze: “you behold in me the shadow of Alphonso de Avilla.”

“Just

“Just Providence !” exclaimed the Countess, with mingled astonishment and joy—“Is it possible !—Are you still in being—Oh, tell me !—Do you know,” continued she, with eagerness, “have you embraced your child ?”

“I have, amiable, generous Countess—All is known to me,” returned Albertini. “In you I behold the inestimable friend of Victoria, and the generous preserver of my child. The strongest expressions of gratitude would be inadequate to declare the emotions of my heart.”

“Oh, talk not thus,” said the Countess. “I endeavoured but to fulfil the duties of humanity—and how great is my reward ! Ah ! why has the fortunate circumstance of your being still in existence been concealed from me, even for a day. Inform me how you discovered your child in the person of my *protégée*.”

In answer to the eager enquiries of the Countess, the Marchese detailed the particulars of the meeting of Albertini and

his daughter ; and the benevolent heart of the former beat with sensations of the truest felicity, as she reflected that to her humane care of the interesting Josephine, might be attributed the unexpected happiness of two persons, whose misfortunes she had ever commiserated, and whose virtues she esteemed. That Albertini had assumed the sacred habit more through conscientious than prudential motives, had been demonstrated by a life of exemplary piety, and the practice of every moral virtue ; and the great advantages Ferdinand had derived from his instructions, impressed the Countess with a conviction of his having expiated every error of his early days, by sincere and lasting penitence. Could she then but rejoice in the happiness of a man, whom she now thought deserving of every humane attention she had shewn his hapless wife and unprotected daughter ?

The miniature constantly worn by Josephine, had kept in the recollection of the
Countess,

Countess, the features of Don Alphonso de Avilla; and neither time nor the sacred habit of Albertini, had made so material an alteration, as to prevent that lady being struck with a countenance so well remembered.

The Countess, anxious to place the casket in the possession of the Father, and to communicate each particular, which might aid his endeavours to procure a reconciliation with Don Carlos de Girone, appointed an interview with Albertini on the following morning. The remainder of the day and evening were passed in interesting conversation.

The Marchese slightly enquired of the Countess, whether she had answered the letter of Santa Clara? and was astonished at hearing, in reply, that she had not received any letter for the Abbess from some time, although she had written twice to the latter.

Concluding that the letter of Santa

Clara had, by some means, been lost, the Marchese felt the keenest regret at the apparent impracticability of gaining any information, with respect to Guidoni, unless Ferdinand should make his appearance at the castle, an event which was by no means certain.

At the hour appointed, Father Albertini waited on the Countess. After an affecting interview with him, the latter, accompanied by Rosalia, proceeded to Santa Maria, where the grateful Josephine received her beloved protectress with unaffected joy. While Rosalia and Josephine, on an intimation from the Abbess, joined the sisterhood, the Countess informed Santa Clara, that the letter mentioned to her by the Marchese had not been received; but her surprise and pleasure were excessive, when the venerable lady acquainted her with its purport; and added the most earnest enquiries with regard to the Count Guidoni, following by an assurance
that

that the Marchese would not withhold his approbation of his suit.

“Then our Rosalia may yet be happy!” exclaimed the delighted Countess. “The day preceding Ferdinand’s departure with Don Hernandez for Rome, he received a letter from an ancient domestic of the Count Guidoni, to whom my son had lately written, on not receiving an answer to a letter addressed to his Lord, at Guidoni Castle. The old man,” continued the Countess, “respectfully informed Ferdinand that the Count was absent, that his return was expected within a month, and that the letter should be delivered on the moment of his arrival at the castle.”

“The letter of Ferdinand,” the Countess added, “is expressly calculated to encourage the hopes of his friend; we may, therefore, expect to see the Count soon after the receipt.”

The Countess then proceeded to mention the amiable qualities of Guidoni, on which she discoursed with so animated a
5 pleasure,

pleasure, that the Abbess became impatient to behold so interesting and admirable a character as the Count was represented to be.

Confident that Josephine would be exposed to no embarrassment or perplexity by the addresses of her son, the Countess brought her favourite with her, on her return to the castle, and Albertini had the happiness of again embracing his lovely daughter.

The presence of the Countess diffused an air of gladness throughout the castle. Immediately on her return from Santa Maria, she sought a private interview with the Marchese, who was most agreeably surprised by the communication, which the Countess, impatient to impart what related to the Count Guidoni, could not refrain from making. Again she was lavish in her commendations of the young Count; for Ferdinand had related to her so many noble traits in the character of his friend, as fully justified the high opinion the Countess entertained of this

this young nobleman—an opinion in which the Marchese readily coincided; and was no less happy to hear the praises bestowed on him by the Countess, than was that lady gratified by the evident pleasure with which her discourse was attended to.

Several times during the day, the artless Rosalia was but too much inclined to listen to the suggestions of her heart, which urged her to hazard a slight and indirect inquiry, on the subject that now occupied her thoughts. The presence of the Countess had revived a thousand tender recollections, which the interest Rosalia had taken in the concerns of Josephine, had partly suppressed, and she found it difficult to restrain the questions that repeatedly hovered on her lips. Sensible of the impropriety of such a procedure, however ardently desirous of learning whether the friendship of Ferdinand and the Count Guidoni had been renewed, she continued
silent,

silent, and determined not to attempt obtaining the wished for intelligence, at the expence of her own approbation.

Much as the Countess would have been gratified by making known to Rosalia the kind indulgence with which the Marchese considered her sentiments for Guidoni, yet prudence withheld her from confessing her knowledge of his generous intentions, lest the information should cherish hopes in the bosom of her young friend, that might end in disappointment.

On the following week, as the Duke, the Marchese, the Countess, and Father Albertini, were, one morning, conversing on several interesting concerns relative to each other, in a pavilion at some small distance from the castle, (Rosalia and Josephine having just quitted them) a domestic entered to inform the Marchese that a stranger requested to see him. As the Marchese had no concealments from the company then present, he ordered the person to be conducted

ducted to the pavilion ; and the domestic shortly after returned, followed by the stranger, who, on his entrance, respectfully presented a packet to the Marchese.

Di Romanzini, having apologized for opening the envelope, retired to a window to peruse the contents of the inclosure, but scarcely had he read three lines, when, turning hastily to the messenger, he demanded, in a tone of doubt and suspicion, whence he came?

“From Guidoni Castle, my Lord,” was the answer ; “I have the honour to serve the Count Guidoni.”

The Marchese instantly glanced his eye on the signature ;—then, in visible emotion, proceeded to read the contents of the letter. No sooner had he concluded, than he exclaimed—“Good Heavens ! is it possible !—Yet surely I may trust to the assurances of the Count Guidoni. Be not surprised, my dear friends,” continued he, addressing the parties present. “No, you will not ; you cannot be surprised, when
you

you shall know the contents of this paper, at my being unable to contain my wonder—my joy—read,” added the agitated Marchese, presenting the letter to Albertini.

The Father hastily perused the extraordinary epistle, the purport of which excited his amazement, almost as much as it had done that of the Marchese.

“This letter contains joyful intelligence, indeed!” said the Father, when he had ceased reading. “My Lord,” continued he, addressing the Duke, “the writer of this, the amiable Count Guidoni, herein informs the Marchese that he may expect soon to receive some pleasing information relative to the long lost and lamented Vivonio, whom the Count Guidoni asserts he has some reason to suppose is still in being.”

It would be in vain to attempt describing the effects which these words of Albertini produced on the venerable Duke. His feeble frame became convulsed, and his trembling lips could scarcely utter the devout

vout and rapturous ejaculations which his gratitude to Providence suggested.

Excess of joy rendered the Marchese almost wild. Albertini could well account for his emotion, it being signified in the letter he had just been reading, that the Count Guidoni, accompanied by the much regretted Vivonio, would soon arrive at Orenza. This intelligence the good Father, apprehensive of the consequences, had not immediately communicated to the Duke, whose mind he deemed it necessary should be previously prepared for the reception of the joyful tidings.

The Countess, whom Albertini had drawn aside, and in few words whispered the real occasion of the Marchese's unbounded joy, participated in the happiness of her friend ; but recollecting that should Rosalia return to the pavilion while the present incoherent expressions of joy continued, she would probably be unable to support the sudden surprise such a scene would occasion ; the Countess therefore quickly

quickly withdrew, and hastened to the gardens, whither she knew Rosalia and Josephine had repaired; the former for the purpose of giving directions to the gardeners, with respect to some favourite plants of her's.

Here the Countess found the young friends intently observing the men, who were following the orders of their beloved young lady with pleasure and alacrity.

Rosalia, the moment she perceived the Countess, was struck with the lively expression of joy that shone in her still beautiful countenance.

“Ah!” exclaimed each of the lovely girls, as they flew to meet their valued friend—“How delighted you appear! Inform us quickly, dearest Countess, what has occasioned these indications of joy?”

“Has my father,” eagerly enquired Josephine, “received any pleasing intelligence?”

“As the friend of the noble family, he has,” replied the Countess; “for the Marchese

chese has just received the most joyful information ; and I am come to prepare my beloved children for the happiness that awaits them. Although the news chiefly concerns my Rosalia, yet Josephine will feel the liveliest pleasure in beholding the felicity of her friends. You had a brother, my Rosalia ; he was supposed to be no more——.”

“ Supposed !” interrupted the lovely girl, bewildered betwixt astonishment and joy. “ Ah ! is it possible !—My brother—that Vivonio whom my father so much lamented.—Oh, keep me not in suspense.”

“ It is hoped he lives !”

Rosalia threw herself into the arms of the Countess.—“ Oh, my father—my beloved father !” cried she, recovering from her first emotion ; “ lead me to him—let me witness and partake his joy.—Oh, gracious Power,” she added, raising her fine eyes to heaven, “ kind Providence, that has preserved my dearest brother, in what
manner

manner can I prove the humble gratitude which fills my heart!" Then giving her hand to the Countess, she said—"Let us fly."

While proceeding towards the pavilion, the Countess said—"Be not surprised, my Rosalia—It is possible you will hear the Count Guidoni mentioned—he it is——"

At the name of Guidoni Rosalia became fixed—the paleness of death overspread her cheek; and as the Countess was proceeding to inform her that the intelligence received of Vivonio had been communicated by the Count Guidoni, her sensations overpowered her, and she sunk apparently lifeless into the arms of the Countess and Josephine.

As the Countess had involuntarily made a pause after pronouncing the words—"he it is," she immediately perceived the dreadful mistake Rosalia had fallen into; and almost distracted at being, though innocently so, the cause of her present state of insensibility, she remained incapable of
affording

affording her any assistance. Josephine, equally alarmed, though more collected, called loudly to the gardeners, who were at a small distance, and water being procured by their means, the lovely object of their respective fears soon recovered.

“ *Guidoni—my brother !*” faltered the shuddering Rosalia, as she raised her timid eyes to the face of the Countess, who almost dreaded to undeceive her, lest joy at finding she had not at first fully comprehended the truth, should occasion a relapse.

“ I think,” said the Countess, hesitating, “ I think I did not intimate that the Count Guidoni and your brother were the same person.”

“ Indeed !” exclaimed Rosalia, the colour at the moment rushing into her pale cheek, “ I thought you said——”

“ Dear Signora,” tenderly observed Josephine, “ the Countess was informing you that the happy discovery of your lamented brother had been effected by the
Count

Count Guidoni; but your sudden illness might have prevented your——.”

Rosalia, who, some minutes before, had sunk under the terrors of her own imagination, had now sufficient command over herself to moderate her joy at this explanation. She clasped her hands, and, while the glow of grateful rapture suffused her face, she expressed, in animated terms, her heartfelt acknowledgments to the Countess; then, with all the speed her agitation would permit, she hastened with the Countess and Josephine towards the pavilion.

The Marchese, anxious to communicate to his daughter the blissful tidings which had just reached him, was descending the steps of the portico, when he perceived her approaching.

In a few minutes Rosalia was enfolded in his parental embrace.—“My Rosalia—my beloved child!” he exclaimed, “rejoice in the unexpected felicity of your father. Our Vivonio—our long lost Vivonio is found!”

found !”—The heart of Rosalia beat quick with transport. She essayed to give utterance to her feelings, but words were inadequate to do justice to the rapturous emotions of her bosom.

The messenger of the Count Guidoni attended the happy party to the Castle, where the faithful domestics soon learned the joyous intelligence of Vivonio's recovery. The ancient halls now resounded with their acclamations; and the tear of gratitude trembled in the eye of Di Romanzini, as surrounded by the affectionate throng, he confirmed the report of the messenger.

Happy are those who live in the *hearts* of their dependents. Sincerity animated the voices of the Marchese's domestics, and the bosom of their Lord swelled with emotions of the purest delight, as the vaulted avenues of the immense edifice re-echoed the sounds of unfeigned joy—the ardent expressions of hearts rejoicing in

the happiness of a revered father, and a friend, rather than that of a master.

Orders were issued by the Duke, who was now apprised of the felicity in store, for preparations to be made, as splendid as the intermediate time would admit of, to celebrate the arrival of the young Count Vivonio, and the amiable guest, who was expected to accompany him to the castle.

Happiness now illumined every countenance, and the solemn silence went to reign in the magnificent halls of Orenza, had yielded to the sounds of universal festivity.

Amidst the general joy, the messenger was not neglected; and the poor fellow scarcely knew how to conduct himself amongst a set of people who imagined they could never shew him attentions sufficient to express their thankfulness to him, as the bearer of the tidings that had occasioned them so much happiness.

The

The Marchese, in answer to the eager questions he had put to the messenger, learned, that when the letter was dispatched from Guidoni Castle, his Lord and the young Marchese had arrived there about half an hour prior to his setting off for Orenza; that both the young noblemen were in disguise, and appeared extremely fatigued; and that the Count Guidoni would not retire to repose until he had sent off the courier.

When the delighted society had recovered from the first effects of their late joyful surprise, the Marchese, surrounded by his family and guests, attempted to reproduce the letter of Count Guidoni; but again his emotions rendered his words almost unintelligible, and he was obliged to request Father Albertini to read it aloud.

The Father immediately prepared to obey the wish of the Marchese, while his attentive auditors gazed on him with looks of anxious expectation. Rosalia alone was incapable, through agitation, of at-

tending to the first lines he read of the letter, the contents of which were as follow:—

“In addressing the Marchese di Romanzini, I feel confident that I shall not *intrude* on his attention. The interesting intelligence, it is my good fortune to convey, will, I hope, prove a source of the highest felicity to the amiable inmates of Orenza Castle.

“I have frequently heard that your Lordship mourns a son, who—shall I proceed?—Prepare yourself, my Lord, for an event which hitherto I should imagine you have scarcely dared to hope—your lost Vivonio—he lives—I have the inexpressible happiness of assuring you of this delightful truth. A short time hence I hope to feel the transport of restoring to your arms—a son, such as the most ardent wishes of your heart could hope. When I shall

shall have the pleasure of arriving at Orenza, I will detail the fortunate circumstances which led to the discovery of his identity, and the means employed to effect his restoration to the bosom of his illustrious family. At present it would be impracticable to communicate particulars; the attempt would only procrastinate the intelligence I have now the happiness to impart.

“ Allow me to add, that, apprehensive of the consequences which might have resulted from your emotion, had you been first addressed by your son, I dissuaded him from writing, which he was extremely anxious to do, until he reflected that your sudden surprise might be attended with danger.

“ The young Marchese entreats me to prepare your Lordship to receive in him a son devoted to you by every tie of filial love and reverence. Your early fondness is not obliterated from his heart. The remembrance of your paternal kindness has

E 3

been

been the subject of constant reflection; and though your *name* was not imprinted on his infant mind, the recollection of your person and affection has never been erased.

“In a few hours we shall commence our journey to Orenza, where I hope to see the virtuous Marchese di Romanzini happy in the possession of a son who merits his warmest regards.

“In this pleasing expectation, my Lord, I bid you adieu; and permit me to add, that the happiness of the inestimable family of Orenza, will ever constitute the highest felicity of

“ENRICO COUNT GUIDONI.”

“Amiable, interesting Guidoni!” exclaimed the Marchese, “thou art indeed worthy the distinction of every feeling mind. My happiness in the recovery of my long lost Vivonio, is heightened by receiving;

ceiving him from thy hand. Albertini, my friend, could you have hoped for this ?”

“ We may hope every thing,” returned the Father, “ from the protecting goodness of that beneficent Power, who ever watches over the innocent, and who never omits revealing and punishing the guilty, but for wise and good, though inscrutable purposes. Doubt not, my Lord,” he continued, “ but that the secret enemy of your repose is about to be discovered. But this is not the hour for the recollection of your injuries. Humble gratitude to the all-gracious Disposer of events, becomes us now, and we must remember *mercy*. You, my Lord, are happy in the certainty of possessing a son, who, according to the animated representations of the Count Guidoni, is worthy to share your tenderest regards ; and it is by the interposition of Providence solely that he now lives to receive your blessing.”

The sentiments of Albertini were but those of the amiable party, before whom he had expressed them. They, by no means, needed an exhortation to join in the pious effusions of that good man's heart.

“Who is this young nobleman, my dear Di Romanzini, to whom we are so much indebted?” enquired the Duke.

The Marchese, in answer to this question, acquainted the Duke with his former intimacy with the father of the Count, and concluded with the highest eulogiums on Guidoni.

While the Marchese was lavishing his praises on the Count, Rosalia sat trembling beside the Countess; and, covered with blushes, which did not escape the observation of her father, who, appearing not to notice her confusion, she strove to regain composure; and, though not quite successful in her efforts, she soon was able to join in the conversation, the while she rejoiced

rejoiced in the hope of finding in her restored brother an amiable friend, worthy her fondest regard.

Could the Marchese have ascertained the route of the expected travellers, he would have set off to meet them ; but the Count Guidoni's silence on that point, and the ignorance of the messenger with respect to it, completely disappointed the wishes of the impatient Di Romanzini, and he was compelled to await their arrival, however irksome the interval might appear.

Notwithstanding the thoughts of the Marchese were occupied by the recent joyful communication, and the prospect of approaching happiness, he could not help observing the sweet smiles of animated delight that played over the lovely features of his daughter ; and though *he* forbore to make any remarks on her vivacity, the Duke and the Countess, less reserved on the subject, repeatedly congratulated her on the wonderful alteration her late pensive countenance had undergone.

“The loss of the principal part of your fortune, my sweet Rosalia,” said the venerable Di Orenza, “appears to have added to your charms. One would suppose you had considered immense wealth as a misfortune.”

“Ah, my beloved parent,” returned the blushing Rosalia, as she bent over the couch on which the Duke partly reclined, “the wealth of which I was the imagined heiress, was indeed a heavy burthen. Whenever I have cast my eyes towards the extensive domains of Orenza, I have wept the supposed fate of my much-lamented brother; and in the dark shade of each lofty grove, I have often fancied I perceived my father sadly bewailing his lost Vivonio! Oh, how impossible it is for me to speak the joy I feel, in relinquishing to my brother’s claims, those estates I am certain he will possess with honour to his name and family!”

“You have, I perceive, my love, the fullest confidence in the veracity of your
3 brother’s

brother's friend," observed the Marchese di Romanzini, while a half-suppressed smile lingered on his features.

Rosalia's cheek became crimsoned with the deepest glow; and for the first time she suspected that the Marchese was not totally unacquainted with her affection for the Count Guidoni. Her eye involuntarily glanced on the Countess, and the arch expression of that lady's countenance confirmed her suspicion.

Rosalia was now too confused to remain long in the parlour; and as she intended to visit Santa Clara early on the following morning, beside having many orders to give relative to the preparations for the celebration of her brother's arrival, she took the first opportunity of withdrawing for the night. Josephine, whose feeling mind participated in the happiness of her friends, withdrew with her.

When Rosalia had given her orders, she retired to her own apartment. Josephine, who had accompanied her thither, remained

ed conversing on the recent occurrences, until the lateness of the hour reminded her of retiring.

She had quitted the room only a few minutes, when Biancha commenced her simple, though respectful, congratulations; and Rosalia again listened with rapture to the united praises of Vivonio, and the Count Guidoni, whose just representations of the former were now generally known to the household.

The reflections of Rosalia on the events of the day, effectually banished repose from her pillow for some hours. To dwell with rapture on the certainty of beholding a long lost and regretted brother—that brother too, restored to his family by him whose idea she had found it impossible to banish from her mind, almost exceeded credibility.

Rosalia was almost inclined to imagine herself under the influence of an enchanting vision; even her beating heart, and the tears of grateful sensibility that wetted her

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her glowing cheeks, could scarcely assure her that all was reality. She had yet another source of delight: The Marchese too, that beloved, revered parent, whose whole soul might have been supposed to be entirely filled with the anticipated ecstasy of folding in his embrace, a dear lamented son, could yet dwell with animated pleasure on the merits of Guidoni, and ~~over~~ that the Count was worthy the distinction of every feeling mind. With such sentiments of the Count, it was probable, if the Marchese really knew of her attachment, he did not disapprove of it.

This reflection encreased the emotions of Rosalia, and her tears of joy evinced the grateful sense she felt of the parental fondness she had ever experienced, and of the blessings so unexpectedly bestowed by the Divine Being, whom, in soul, she fervently worshipped.

At length, with a mind tranquillized by the effusions of true piety, she resigned herself to the calm slumbers of innocence ;
and

and arose in the morning with a countenance animated with all the charms of exquisite beauty, and beaming with internal goodness.

Impatient to acquaint her revered Santa Clara with the recent discovery, Rosalia had no sooner taken breakfast than she proceeded, accompanied by the Countess, to the convent.

The venerable Abbess heard the joyful tidings with amazement and delight; and while she inwardly breathed her devout thanks to Providence for the unlooked-for restoration of the long-regretted Vivonio, she offered up a prayer for Guidoni, who had been made the instrument of Divine goodness.

The convent now exhibited a scene of joy and expectation; and the good Abbess immediately after the departure of the Countess and Rosalia, commenced preparations for receiving her amiable relative, to whom she longed to give every possible demonstration of affection.

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Had there been sufficient time for soliciting permission to welcome his arrival at the castle, the Abbess would *there* have bestowed her benediction on Vivonio; but as the former was now impracticable, Santa Clara contented herself with the idea, that if Vivonio was really the amiable character he had been described, he would be equally gratified by the affectionate reception he would meet with at Santa Maria.

CHAP. IV.

AT length the moment—the wished-for moment, that terminated the suspense and anxiety of the Di Orenza family, arrived.

One evening, a domestic hastily entering the saloon, announced the Count Guidoni. The door was scarcely thrown open, when the Count entered, followed by a graceful, elegant young man, whom every one present justly concluded to be the expected Vivonio. Before the Count could introduce him as such, the Marchese, greatly agitated, advanced towards the youth, who approached; and falling at the feet of Di Romanzini, exclaimed,

claimed, in a voice tremulous with filial emotion—"My father!"

The Marchese gazed for a moment on the interesting youth.—"My son—my son!" fell from his trembling lips, and as he raised and clasped him to his bosom, tears of parental tenderness and joy stole down his manly cheek.

Released from the fond embrace of the Marchese, Vivonio found himself in the arms of the venerable Duke, whose feelings impeded his speech. The eyes of Vivonio at length encountered his beautiful sister, leaning on the arm of the Countess, and gazing on him eyes which shone through tears of joy.

Vivonio was almost incapable, from emotions the most exquisite, of answering the fond inquiries of his delighted family. The Marchese led the elegant youth toward Rosalia, and as he tenderly embraced his sister, the ever-remembered idea of the Marchesa rose on his mind.

With graceful politeness Vivonio received

ceived the warm congratulations of the Countess, Father Albertini, and Josephine, and endeavoured to express the sense he felt of his present happiness.

The Marchese now addressed the Count Guidoni, whom he apologized to for having so long neglected; then introduced him to the Duke, and those of the party, to whom he had hitherto been unknown but by report; and the Count was compelled to listen to a profusion of the most sincere and grateful acknowledgments.

The eyes of Vivonio sparkled with animated pleasure, as he joined in the ardent thanks which were now offered to the Count; and Rosalia, though she durst not trust herself to dwell with energy on the gratitude that filled her heart, evinced, by the rapture that shone in her beautiful face, how much she felt disposed to consider the Count as the author of the general happiness.

The ancient Bernardo, on hearing of the arrival of his young Lord, ordered refresh-

refreshments to be served in another apartment; and when the Marchese, recovered from his agitation, gave orders to the same effect, he was pleased at finding that the respectful attentions of his domestics had anticipated his command.

The Marchese, well knowing that his faithful attendants were eager to behold their young Lord, was not surprised at observing, as he crossed the marble hall, the whole assemblage there, to offer their humble respects to the son of their noble master, and the heir to the illustrious house of Orenza.

Vivonio regarded the assemblage with sentiments of lively satisfaction, and, addressing himself to the Duke and Marchese, said—

“Ah, my dear parents, I read in the countenances of your ancient domestics, the esteem and veneration they feel for your virtues.”

The venerable Di Orenza affectionately pressed the hand of his amiable grandson,
and

and the Marchese, with an air of virtuous exultation, presented him to his people.

Artless and sincere thanks, for the honour conferred on them, flowed from every lip ; and succeeding joyous congratulations burst, as with one voice, from the faithful household, and the vaulted roofs of the castle echoed with—" May the virtuous and noble names of Di Orenza and Di Romanzini, be known on the earth, till time shall be no more !"

Vivonio, extremely affected with these marks of warm attachment in the domestics, addressed himself to them, assuring them he should ever retain a just sense of their fidelity and zeal.

Charmed with this proof of affability in their young Lord, the shouts of joy were renewed, in which the name of Guidoni was not forgotten.

The weary travellers now partook of an elegant repast, and as the Marchese understood they had journeyed with uncommon speed, he insisted on their retiring,
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to repose, although it was yet early in the evening; and though he was extremely anxious to hear whatever related to a son so mysteriously stolen, so industriously concealed for years, and now so unexpectedly restored, yet he preferred the ease of his Vivonio and the Count, to the indulgence of a feeling so natural.

Neither of the young noblemen, however, appeared sensible of the fatigue they had undergone; and the Count Guidoni would have then recounted the interesting events which had marked the discovery of Vivonio, had not the Marchese been induced, by the above-mentioned consideration, to oppose the polite and friendly wish, which had so much the gratification of that noble youth's relatives in view; and after some persuasion, the Count and Vivonio retired to their respective apartments.

It was not till some time after the young Marchese and the Count had yielded to the wishes of their friends, that it was remarked

ed they had arrived without any attendants, and that the Count Guidoni's dress was particularly plain. On the Marchese enquiring of a domestic, what mode of conveyance the Count and his son had used? he was informed, a couple of fine horses, each of which, when they arrived, appeared covered with foam.

These circumstances gave rise to many surmises, but which soon yielded to the eulogiums which every one now bestowed on Vivonio. The elegance of his person and manners, the dignity of his deportment, the manly beauty of his countenance, and the sweetness of his address, were ample themes of praise, though neither the Duke, nor the Marchese, however lavish, could find words to fully express the feelings of their hearts; while Rosalia, as she dwelt with delight on the subject of her brother's merits, experienced the sweetest emotion, from an internal persuasion that Vivonio, in his manners and conversation, resembled Guidoni.

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Before the remaining parties separated for the night, it was settled that the following day should be devoted to hearing the Count's relation of the means, by which Vivonio had been so happily restored to his family; and on the day succeeding the morrow, a visit was purposed to be paid to the venerable Abbess of Santa Maria; and when these arrangements should have taken place, the public celebration of Vivonio's restoration was to commence.

Refreshed by peaceful slumbers, the young Marchese and the Count Guidoni appeared in the breakfast-room at an early hour, where they found the family were already assembled. The improved and animated looks of Vivonio were beheld with admiration, but the Countess perceived, with concern, that Guidoni appeared much altered. His emotions, the preceding evening, had thrown a glow of pleasure over his face, which was now succeeded by a degree of paleness not natural.

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The Countess hoped, however, that the happiness which she knew awaited him, would soon restore him to that health, which she could not but imagine had been injured by his hopeless affection for Rosalia.

The pale countenance of Guidoni was not unobserved by Rosalia, who, diffident and embarrassed, by a consciousness of the sentiments she entertained, seldom addressed the Count; yet when she did do so, the gratitude she expressed to the preserver of her brother, and the gentleness of her manner, consoled Guidoni for all his sufferings. Hope again shed her cheering influence on his mind, and he encouraged the enchanting idea, that, as her engagements with Ferdinand were entirely at an end, he might excite an interest in her heart. Of this circumstance the Count had been apprised by Ferdinand, whose letter he found on his arrival at Guidoni Castle. But though the latter had therein informed him that his union with Rosalia would

would not take place, yet a delicate regard to his lovely cousin's name prevented him from hinting to Guidoni that she was sensible of *his* merits. An invitation to Naples was all Ferdinand ventured, and which, should the Count accept, Ferdinand inwardly hoped that when at Naples, his friend might be able to urge his suit with success.

Vivonio till now was entirely ignorant of the passion that triumphed over the heart of his chosen friend. His penetration, however, was so acute, that before the conclusion of the morning repast, his observations on the timid smiles of the blushing Rosalia, and the respectful and ill-disguised tenderness of Guidoni, now convinced him, that if the Count had assiduously endeavoured to avoid speaking of Rosalia, it was only to conceal the situation of his own heart, Vivonio having sometimes been struck with the constrained answers he had received to his eager enquiries, with respect to his sister.

Breakfast being concluded, the Count Guidoni, at the united request of every one present, commenced his singular relation ; but, in the course of it, he suppressed so much concerning himself, and was so frequently interrupted by his own feelings, and the repeated exclamations of his attentive and anxious auditors, that it will be necessary to detail his recital more fully.

CHAP. V.

WITH a heart torn by contending emotions, the Count Guidoni hastened from the gardens of the villa Alvanio, on the night when, surprised there by the Count Alvanio, he received from him the information of the intended nuptials of Ferdinand and Rosalia. In passing the temple, the indescribable agony of his mind almost deprived the unhappy Guidoni of strength to proceed, and he leaned against a column, to support his agitated frame. On this spot every tender idea recurred with double force to his tortured mind. With faltering steps he entered the retreat so dear to her he adored. The moon illumined the apartment,

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ment, and presented to his view the lute so often touched by her lovely hand ; the music scattered about, a chair in the same position, and a few flowers in an open window, reminded him of the last evening he had passed there with Rosalia and the Countess.

Guidoni gazed on the well-known images, so affecting to his heart, with an emotion of the keenest sorrow. No exclamation of passion eased his oppressed bosom ; deep despair instantly seized his mind, and after a few moments stay, he slowly quitted the temple, and pursued his way to Gaita.

The Count's servants, who had supposed their Lord would pass the night at the villa Alvanio, and, therefore, had not been alarmed at his absence, were struck with amazement on seeing him enter, the pale image of despair. To the anxious enquiries of a favourite domestic, with respect to his Lord's health, the Count gave no reply ; but commanded that preparations

tions should immediately be made for his return to Guidoni Castle.

This command was given in too peremptory a tone, to allow the attendants to hesitate ; and two hours had scarcely elapsed, when all was in readiness for the Count's departure.

After a journey performed with the utmost expedition, and during which the Count had continued a prey to the deepest affliction, he arrived at Saluzzo in Piedmont, where, finding himself extremely indisposed, he remained for two days ; at the expiration of which, though he was still very ill, the Count and his attendants recommenced their journey, and proceeded on their route to the castle, on mules hired to ascend the Alps ; the carriage being left at Saluzzo.

The Count had arrived within some leagues of his paternal home, when, in a wild and desolate spot, he became too seriously ill to proceed. The affrighted servants perceiving their Lord unable to

retain his seat, assisted him to dismount, and attempted to bear him the remainder of the way in their arms; but the feeble efforts he made to prevent their intentions, and the evident displeasure expressed in his pale countenance, obliged them to desist; and the distressed attendants were deliberating what to do, when the sound of a flute echoed amongst the mountains, and proclaimed the approach of no common musician.

In a few minutes they perceived a young man descending a range of rocks that towered above the road. The stranger observing the situation of the Count, and the alarm and concern of the servants, immediately approached and offered his assistance, with an air of politeness and humanity, that but ill accorded with his dress, which was but little superior to that of a peasant.

On viewing the Count, and feeling his pulse, the young man seemed both surprised and grieved; and declared, that if
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he was moved to any distance, the consequences might prove fatal.

This information encreased the consternation and sorrow of the servants ; and the young stranger, who appeared much affected, proposed conveying their master to a small cottage at no great distance. To this proposition, as there was no alternative, the attendants, though reluctantly, were obliged to assent ; and Guidoni, who was now quite insensible, was gently removed to a neat little cot, situated high amongst the cliffs.

The door was opened by an aged woman, whose mild eyes beamed commiserating pity, on beholding the apparently lifeless Guidoni ; and she waited not to be desired to prepare her humble bed for his reception.

The meek air of the aged Marcella, and the earnest attention she paid to the directions of the young stranger, while preparing some cordials to be administered to the Count, served to give his attendants a very

able opinion of their Lord's entertainers, and quickly divested them of those fears, which the being compelled to take shelter in a cot, they had at first suspected might be the haunt of banditti, had excited.

For two days the Count continued extremely ill, and the young stranger scarcely quitted him a moment during each day. As the night advanced, and the Count sunk into a slumber, Lorenzo, so was the youth called, strayed among the woody cliffs, but seldom remained long absent.

On the third day, one of the Count's servants, who had hastened to Saluzzo, to procure medical assistance, returned from thence with a skilful physician, whom he had prevailed upon to accompany him to the cot.

The physician, on examining into the state of the Count, highly commended the methods the young man had pursued with the patient, averring, that had it not been for his prudent care, the Count could not have survived till then.

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The physician, who was both sensible and humane, was less surprised at the kindness which had been shewn to the Count, than at the singular knowledge and engaging manners of Lorenzo, who appeared, in many points of information, superior to himself; but the constant attention which the precarious state of the Count demanded, prevented, for the present, those inquiries which the physician was inclined to make.

A week elapsed ere the Count could leave his homely bed; but though his health was then in some degree restored, his melancholy and taciturn reserve continued.

During the gradual recovery of Guidoni, Lorenzo was more frequently absent; and when he was questioned by the physician on the subject, he replied, that he was not an inhabitant of the cot; his concern for the Count having alone induced him to remain from home so long, and so repeatedly as he had done. On being

asked where he usually resided? he replied, at the Convent of San Jerome, and immediately turned the discourse to another subject.

In the hope of dissipating the melancholy of the patient, and to indulge the pleasure he himself found in the conversation of Lorenzo, the physician drew the young man to expatiate on several learned and interesting subjects; and to their extreme satisfaction, each observed that the Count attended with evident surprise to their discourse, and at length joined in the conversation.

The goodness of Lorenzo's heart was evinced by the joy that shone in his countenance, at this indication of returning cheerfulness in the Count; at whose request he promised to endeavour to renew his frequent visits at the cottage.

A short time afterwards, the Count became sufficiently recovered to make short excursions amongst the Alpine heights, in which he was accompanied by the worthy

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thy physician and Lorenzo ; to the latter of whom the Count had now become attached by a friendship so lively, that he could scarcely endure his absence.

On every subject that concerned himself, Lorenzo maintained so constant a reserve, that the physician, after being amply rewarded for his skill and humane attention to the Count, returned to Saluzzo, entirely ignorant of the real condition of the youth, who had excited both his curiosity and his regard.

Day after day glided on, and still the Count remained an inmate of the lowly cottage. Desolate and unhappy, he found, in the friendship and conversation of Lorenzo, the only alleviation of his sorrows.

Guidoni dreaded the solitude of his own castle. Every sentiment of honour and virtue forbade him to encourage the passion that filled his heart. Yet he was disgusted with the idea of mixing in the gay circles of a metropolis, where he should in vain seek to find another Rosalia.

The sublime and romantic wildness of the scenery that surrounded his present habitation; the friendship of Lorenzo, and the honest simple manners of the mountaineers, were so peculiarly adapted to his state of mind, that with regret he thought of bidding them adieu.

The Count had too well remarked the reserve of Lorenzo towards the physician, to hazard a minute enquiry into the situation and circumstances of his new friend; and Lorenzo was too humble to intrude the story of his early sorrows on the attention of the Count. All that he could hitherto prevail on himself to intimate to Guidoni was, that he was an orphan, and under the protection of the Abbot of San Jerome; and when the Count repeatedly pressed him to visit Guidoni Castle, he always pleaded his duty to the Abbot, as the occasion of his declining the invitation.

Perceiving that the reserve maintained by Lorenzo began to wear off, the Count,

in one of their evening rambles, ventured some slight inquiries relative to his situation in the convent.

Lorenzo now spoke more openly on the subject, and expatiated on the kindness he had ever experienced from the superior and the community, but never once hinted a wish of the Count's visiting the convent.

“ You have the goodness to express an interest in my concerns, Count Guidoni,” observed Lorenzo; “ and were I at liberty to reveal all I wish, I would, this instant, seek your advice and assistance—but it is impossible.”—The youth paused—a mournful air overspread his countenance; and, after a deep-drawn sigh, he continued.—“ I was found, when an infant,” said he, “ one stormy night, by one of the Fathers, exposed at the gate of the convent, just as the bell chimed for midnight prayers. I was humanely received by the Abbot, cherished and protected by him, and have had the happiness of never yet forfeiting the regard and
friendship

friendship of the community. But the period is not far distant, when I fear I shall no longer retain their good opinion. I have an unconquerable aversion to taking the vows. In less than two months I am to declare my determination on this point; what the consequences of my refusal may prove, I am at present ignorant of. The solemn exhortations of the Abbot, and the incessant importunities of the Monks, to induce me to enter the Order, only serve to render me the more repugnant to their views. There is a mystery in my situation which I cannot illucidate. My final refusal, I hope, will lead to some discovery."

Guidoni listened with some surprise to this account of Lorenzo, and not without a suspicion of its being evasive. He could not imagine that any particular mystery was attached to the fate of Lorenzo; and it appeared to the Count, that the Abbot having humanely adopted, and educated the young man, naturally expected him to enter with joy into the society in which he

he had been so carefully brought up, and so affectionately regarded. That the Abbot, if interested by any private motive, should permit him to be frequently absent from the convent, seemed extremely improbable; and Guidoni could not but attribute what Lorenzo had asserted of mystery in his case, to the effect of a romantic imagination, which was sometimes very evident in the young man. The Count, however, repeated his assurances of friendship; and in the most earnest manner requested of Lorenzo, that if, through his decided refusal to take the religious vows, he should become destitute, he would seek protection in the Castle of Guidoni.

This offer Lorenzo gratefully promised to accept, should the event of his resolve prove unfavourable; but as he did not long pursue the subject, the Count was too considerate to revive it, though his ardent desire of rendering the young man every service in his power, inclined him to ask many questions.

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When they had separated for the night, the Count reflected in what manner he could best provide for his friend, without wounding his feelings. Lorenzo had hinted, that although he might be compelled to seek the protection of the Count for a few months, he should still consider himself as independent, and at liberty to pursue any future course he might think proper.

All offers of a pecuniary sort he had proudly rejected; and the Count had learned from the aged Marcella, that Lorenzo had, for several years, been in the practice of assisting the travellers who had met with any accident near the cottage, without receiving the slightest reward but what self-approbation afforded.

The more Guidoni felt his friendship for this young man encrease, the less he was inclined to quit the cottage, without visiting the Convent of San Jerome. His wish in this respect he had sometimes mentioned to Lorenzo, who appeared so much distressed at the intimation, that the Count
had

had hitherto forbore to visit that religious society. This singular circumstance Guidoni now considered with much attention, and began to entertain some slight suspicions not very favourable to the character of the youth. Yet the amiable manners of Lorenzo, his sentiments, so just and noble, were inconsistent with the idea of his being capable of either duplicity or artifice. Guidoni could not long harbour such a thought; but he determined, at their next interview, to require an explanation of the reason of Lorenzo's visible repugnance to his visiting the convent:

Next day the Count impatiently awaited the arrival of the young man;—but half the day passed on without his appearing: and Guidoni had partly resolved to go to San Jerome, when the entrance of an aged monk relieved him from his incertitude. The Father presented to the Count a polite message from the Abbot, requesting the honour of a visit.

Guidoni, with pleasure, accepted the
invita-

invitation, and accompanied the Monk on his return to the convent.

The path they took led down a steep descent, which terminated in a winding glen, shadowed by lofty pines and fir trees. An air of indescribable wildness and solemnity pervaded this valley, in some parts of which the grey projecting rocks overhung the path, and threatened the traveller with destruction, while the hoarse torrents roared through the craggy precipices.

As they proceeded, the Monk preserved a profound silence, yet now and then observed Guidoni with scrutinizing attention.

The Count perceived the penetrating glances of the Father, and began to suspect that his young friend might be involved in some disagreeable predicament, to which was owing the message he had received. Regardless of the repulsive manner of his companion, Guidoni interrupted the silence, by saying—

“Can you inform me, Holy Father, why
my

my presence is so immediately required at the convent ?”

“I cannot,” mildly replied the Monk. “Our Superior is not very communicative.”

Thus answered, the Count forbore any further enquiry ; and the Father resumed his silence. In this manner they proceeded, until they came to a low arch, cut through a slight part of the rock, and which they had no sooner passed, than the Count found himself at the foot of a long flight of stone steps.

“On the top of this summit stands the convent, my Lord,” said the Monk.

Guidoni ascended, and soon reached a rocky terrace, that ran along the front of an ancient building, the pointed roof of which rose above the mouldering walls that surrounded it.

The Monk led the way along the terrace, and the Count now beheld a large church of gothic architecture.

At the gate of the convent, the Abbot,
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a venerable and placid-looking man, received the Count with much politeness, and conducted him to an apartment, where several of the elder Monks were apparently waiting the Count's arrival, to partake of an elegant collation.

The cheerful welcome, and polite attentions the Count received, could not but excite his surprise; and he became anxious to learn the cause of his being invited.

During the repast, the Count observed one of the Monks endeavouring to attract his notice, by several significant looks and gestures, which were repeated as often as the attention of the Abbot, and the other Monks, were fixed on such objects as prevented their perceiving his attempts.

Guidoni watched an opportunity of intimating to the Monk, by an intelligent glance, that he had noticed him; and the Father, as soon as the collation was removed, withdrew.

The Count, after a short desultory conversation,

versation, enquired for Lorenzo, and spoke of the services he had received from that young man, in terms of the most lively gratitude.

“Lorenzo was fortunate, my Lord,” returned the Abbot, “in arriving so opportunely to render his trifling assistance ; but I am by no means pleased with his having so long concealed from me the circumstance of a nobleman being compelled, through indisposition, to remain in a cottage, when every accommodation and attention this religious house could give, would have been joyfully offered to the Count Guidoni. It was by mere accident that we discovered, late last night, that you was so unsuitably lodged : and now, my Lord,” added the Abbot, “permit me to request that you will fix your abode at the convent, till you shall feel yourself sufficiently restored to travel.”

Guidoni, in the hope that, during the visit, all his doubts with respect to Lorenzo would be cleared, immediately accepted

cepted the invitation ; and repeated his enquiries for the young man, who, he was then informed, would attend him in less than two hours.

“ He is an orphan, I understand, Father,” said the Count.

“ He is so,” replied the Abbot, rather confused. “ He has acquainted you with his story, Count ? ”

“ I merely know,” replied the latter, “ that he is an orphan. May I inquire what are his future expectations ?—He is a young man of uncommon talents ; and his extensive knowledge, and prepossessing manners, would render him a shining figure in the world.”

“ He possesses talents, undoubtedly,” returned the Abbot, “ but he can never display them in the world ; and unfortunately he is too much attached to the idea of venturing into its delusive snares ; he does not relish the calm enjoyments of peaceful seclusion ; and I have vainly urged him to become one of my society.

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As I do not wish to force his inclinations, I reflect with regret that he must not look forward to any other prospect."

"Permit him, Holy Father," cried Guidoni, eagerly, "to accompany me. My fortune is ample, and I will employ *that*, and all my interest, to place him in any situation better suited to his wishes."

The Abbot appeared extremely embarrassed by this unexpected proposition, and with some confusion he said—

"It pains me, Count Guidoni, to reject your offers; they are highly liberal, and amiable; but it is impossible to comply with your requests. No situation can be more proper for Lorenzo than his present. From the moment of my finding him, I have devoted him to a monastic life; and I doubt not but time, and my remonstrances, may induce him to accede to my wish."

The Superior now hastily turned the discourse, and in a few minutes after, led the
Count

Count to survey the chapel and the gardens.

The rich ornaments the former displayed, evidenced the wealth of the convent ; and the latter were curiously formed, being laid out in several squares, contrived on the rocks, and covered with earth from the valley. One of the squares overlooked the deep glen ; and from this spot a fall of water, descending from rocks higher than those on which the gardens were formed, was visible, until it reached the broad torrent in the valley, the rapid course of which disappeared beneath the thick and gloomy wood.

As Guidoni gazed on the tremendous precipices and towering rocks, partly concealed by clumps of pines and wild shrubs, and on the several flights of steps ascending to the convent, he doubted the possibility of the weary travellers ever having sought out a shelter in such an obscure and solitary spot. That Lorenzo should sigh
for

for emancipation, he now perceived was but natural; and he determined to use every effort in his power to effect his liberation.

The vesper bell summoned the monks to the chapel, whither the Count followed; and, amidst the solemn chaunting of the brothers, he soon distinguished the clear and plaintive voice of Lorenzo.

The Count looked around, but could not perceive the youth. He was, however, forcibly struck with his style and expression. A solo in the anthem rivetted his attention; for the style of Lorenzo reminded him of Rosalia.

Guidoni trembled with emotion. At that moment he was struck with the idea, that Lorenzo resembled the Marchese di Romanzini. The Count had frequently imagined he had seen a countenance to which that of Lorenzo bore a likeness; and he now accused himself a thousand times with not having paid more attention to this circumstance.

Impatient beyond description, the Count waited till the service concluded. Meanwhile he was bewildered with a variety of doubts and suspicions. Was it possible that this young man could be the long lost son of the Marchese?—Guidoni was strongly inclined to think so, although he had heard that this child had been murdered. He deeply regretted not having made minute enquiries into the particulars of that loss; but Rosalia had wept at the mention of this lamented brother, and Guidoni, from that moment, had never resumed the subject. From Ferdinand he had heard some slight account of the misfortunes of the Marchese, but as they were a theme peculiarly distressing to the Count Alvanio, they were never mentioned in his family; of course, Ferdinand knew but little of the matter.

With joy Guidoni beheld the Monks retiring through the long aisles, and in a few minutes he descried Lorenzo. The glow of pleasure that animated the face of the
young

young man, rendered him less like the Marchese, and Guidoni began to doubt. But when the suffusion fled, and an air of sadness succeeded, the hopes of the Count revived; and he became, as he earnestly viewed Lorenzo, more and more confirmed in his idea of having discovered the long lost Vivonio.

At supper Lorenzo was present; and the Count could not avoid being pleased with the respectful and filial attention he paid to the Abbot, who certainly addressed his adopted son with the mild benignity of a parent.

The most entertaining and interesting subjects were introduced in discourse by the Abbot and several of the brotherhood, who appeared men of excellent understandings, and less affected with the bigotted rules of their community than could be supposed; but the Count was too much occupied by his recent suspicions, to attend to their conversation.

The Superior politely attributing the

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abstraction

abstraction of Guidoni to his late illness, and the fatigue of his walk to the convent, soon ordered one of the brothers, and Lorenzo, to shew the Count to his apartment.

A long narrow passage, which led past the dormitory, terminated in an apartment evidently intended for the reception of strangers of rank. Thither Guidoni was preceded by the Monk, bearing a light. Lorenzo slowly followed; and on the Count's turning to address him, he answered with an air of distant politeness, at the same time making a sign to Guidoni, not to notice him.

At the door of the chamber Lorenzo paused; and the Monk having lighted a silver tripod lamp, which was suspended over the chimney piece, they both withdrew, respectfully wishing the Count undisturbed repose.

Guidoni was greatly disappointed by the disappearance of Lorenzo. Fully impressed with the idea of his being the long lost
son

son of the Marchese di Romanzini, the Count felt anxiously desirous to question the youth on every incident of his early years. Lorenzo had said he was three years of age, when received into the convent; it was, therefore, possible that some slight recollection of circumstances, prior to that event, might still dwell on his mind; and which would either confirm or put an end to the hopes the Count felt inclined to indulge. That some mystery was really attached to the situation of the young man, Guidoni was now fully convinced of. The Abbot's evident embarrassment, and his rejection of the Count's offer to place Lorenzo in an establishment more agreeable to his wishes than a monastic life, the reserve of the youth, the mysterious signs made by the Monk during dinner, and several other circumstances, confirmed the Count in his present opinion; and increased his anxious wishes to develop the truth.

Occupied by these reflections, Guidoni

paced the chamber for more than an hour. To sleep was impossible. The expiring lamp, at length, warned him to retire; but repose still fled his pillow. The hour of midnight prayer had elapsed, and he heard the monks repairing to their respective cells. The closing of doors echoed along the vaulted passages, and, in a short time, all was again silent; yet the Count slept not. He had continued some time ruminating, when a faint noise caused him to throw aside the curtain, and he beheld the door slowly open, and a monk, whose face was partly concealed by a cowl he wore, enter the room.

“Lorenzo!” softly exclaimed the Count.

The stranger carried a lamp, shaded by part of his habit; and having fastened the door, he raised the light, and Guidoni perceived the countenance of the Monk who had endeavoured to attract his attention at dinner. He motioned to the Count to be silent, and advancing towards the middle of
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of the chamber, he apologized for his intrusion.

The Monk spoke in a very low voice, and appeared to be apprehensive of being overheard.

The Count hastily threw on his clothes ; and in a few minutes was seated beside the Monk, near the dying embers of a wood fire.

“ I have taken this liberty, in compassion to the young Lorenzo,” said the Father, after a pause, during which he regarded the Count with an uneasy and embarrassed air.—“He informs me that you honour him with your friendship :—I hope he does not deceive himself in this particular, Count.”

“ By no means, Holy Father,” replied the agitated Guidoni. “ I am not accustomed to make insincere professions.”

“ Then, my Lord, your generosity and goodness of heart will induce you to assist me in doing an act of justice,” returned the Father. “ To your honour I will confide a secret unknown even to the young man

himself. You have heard that he is an orphan—the whole community, myself excepted, suppose the same. Three months only are past since I discovered the truth. The Abbot has, I suspect, known it from the hour in which the child was found at the convent gate; but he has carefully concealed the secret from the brotherhood and the young man.”

The Monk paused—Guidoni, with eager impatience, and anxious expectation, waited his further communication.

At length the Father resumed—

“It is now about three months,” said he, “when, returning from visiting a sick peasant, whose cottage is some miles distant, I was benighted in the dreary glen through which you passed, in your way to the convent. The night was awfully still and dark, and the lowering clouds seemed to presage a violent storm. It was impossible to proceed over a bridge, formed of a single plank, thrown across the narrowest part of the torrent; and I
sat

sat down on an edge of the rock, determined to wait till the morning dawned, knowing I could well account to the Abbot for my absence.

“ I had not remained there half an hour, when the lightning, in quick and successive flashes, threw momentary illuminations on the surrounding objects ; and the thunder, in tremendous peals, vibrated through the valley. I closed my eyes on these awful messengers of death, and, in fervent prayer, recommended my soul to the Almighty Power, who directs the warring elements.

“ The storm continued with unabated violence. In the short intervals of silence, I fancied I heard a human voice. It was no mistake—the voice grew louder. I opened my eyes, and raising them, beheld on a projection of the rock, a little above me, the figure of a man. A lengthened flash served to discover us to each other ; and, with horror, I observed that a bright stiletto gleamed in his hand. He had per-

G 5

ceived

ceived me, and, while uttering a dreadful execration, he attempted to spring towards the spot on which I kneeled. All righteous Providence !—the murderous steel attracted the lightning, and he fell at my feet, apparently dead. With trembling limbs I stooped to examine the body. A deep groan, at that moment, issued from his lips, and he endeavoured to speak. I afterwards found that one side of his body had been scorched by the avenging flash, and that in his fall his right leg and arm had been broken.

“After several vain efforts, he articulated a few words; but in a tone so languid and indistinct, that I was obliged to make him repeat them. With great difficulty, he at length pronounced—‘Do you belong to the Convent of San Jerome, Father?’

“I replied in the affirmative; and spoke to him in the most consolatory terms; not suffering him to suppose I had suspected his intention of plunging the stiletto into my bosom.

“He

“He now appeared to endure the most excruciating agonies of mind and body ; and in heart-rending accents he besought me to hear his confession, and grant him absolution.

“There was something terrible, beyond description, in his convulsive efforts to speak, and it was but seldom that I could understand him. However, I comprehended enough of his broken sentences, to learn that Lorenzo, the reputed orphan, cherished by the Abbot, was, in reality, the stolen son of a Neapolitan nobleman, who, to that hour, regretted his loss, and had long considered him as no more.

“The confession of the dying wretch, whose name was Lopez Vanilla, was to this effect—that induced by the intreaties and promises of a man, whom he regarded as a friend, he had, about sixteen years back, accompanied him to a villa near Naples, which the noble parents of Lorenzo at that time occupied : That after a vain

attempt to carry off the Marchesa, he contrived to enter the villa at night, and forced the infant from the arms of his nurse, at the time when the family were thrown into deep affliction, by the decease of the Marchesa, who had suddenly expired, and the mental derangement of her Lord, in consequence of this melancholy event.

“Horror-struck, I listened to this dreadful tale; and eagerly enquired the name of the injured nobleman? This I learned. The unhappy Lopez then charged me, in the most solemn manner, never to divulge his confession to the Abbot, but to take the first opportunity of writing to the Marchese, to inform him of his son being still alive, and where he was concealed. I then enquired the name of the monster, who had urged him to the commission of such iniquitous deeds? but his attempts to reply were prevented by strong convulsions. Afterwards, at intervals, I caught these words—‘In this rock—The treasure,
Father

Father—I give it to the convent—Pray—Pray for my lost soul!’ he continued for some minutes, thus imploring my prayers, and then expired.”

“What is the name of the injured Marchese?” demanded Guidoni, with breathless eagerness.

“The Marchese di Romanzini,” replied the Monk.

An exclamation of rapturous joy from the lips of the Count, surprised the Father, whose looks seemed to require silence; however, the loud and animated expressions of pleasure which Guidoni continued to utter, at finding his hopes thus confirmed, ceased only on the Monk’s entreating him not to alarm the brotherhood.

The Count instantly checked himself; and the Father, after listening to discover whether all remained silent, resumed his discourse.

“You are, doubtless, my Lord,” said he, “well acquainted with the Marchese di Romanzini?”

“I am,”

“I am,” replied the Count. “He is one of the most amiable of men. But wherefore have you so long delayed communicating to him intelligence of such high importance?”

“The isolated situation of my convent,” returned the Monk, “and the danger of entrusting a letter of such consequence to any of the peasantry, have hitherto prevented me. I hoped that Heaven would direct some stranger to this lonely spot, on whom I might rely, without apprehension of being betrayed: and at length my earnest prayers and expectations are fulfilled. The Divine Providence, who ever watches over the innocent and oppressed, has conducted you hither, Count; and in whom could I so well confide, as in a young nobleman, to whose amiable character I am no stranger? The name of Guidoni has often been the theme of the traveller within these walls; and we are all well informed of the hospitality and generosity, for which the noble owners

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ers of Guidoni Castle have long been famed."

The Count politely replied to these just eulogiums of the Monk ; and then enquired his reasons for keeping from Lorenzo the secret of his real origin ?

" Knowing the disposition of the youth, and fearing, that if informed of such important particulars, the warmth of his temper, and the ardour of his imagination, might overcome his discretion, I have hitherto forbore the communication," the Father replied. " But being well apprised of the intentions of the Abbot, respecting the young man's taking the vows, I ventured to warn him to avoid, if possible, the being drawn into such a step. At the same time I gave him an indirect promise, that I would, at some future period, unfold my motive for such a charge. Lorenzo heard me with attention ; and surprised me by affirming, that his determination never to embrace a monastic life was already fixed."

" Where

“Where was the body of the wretched Lopez interred?” asked the Count.

“In the burying-ground of the convent,” replied the Monk.

“Did the Abbot betray any emotion on learning his death?” enquired Guidoni.

“Yes,” returned the Father; “and ordered the cottage of Lopez to be diligently searched, and all his effects to be conveyed to the convent: but in the search, nothing of any consequence was found. Our Superior,” continued the Monk, “is apparently a holy and humane man; how far he may be acquainted with the circumstances I have related, I cannot pretend to say; yet I must again observe, the dying man strictly enjoined me to silence towards *him*.”

“As the expressions uttered by the expiring wretch,” remarked the Count, “assuredly implied that some treasure was concealed in the rocks, you have doubtless searched for *that* with success?”

“No,” replied the Father: “I have
not

not dared to hazard such a step ; but the moment the youth is restored to his parent, I shall examine each secret recess in the rocks. Were I to attempt such a procedure before that period, it would expose me to questions from the Abbot, which would extremely embarrass me."

The Count approved of the precautions taken by the Monk, and the latter proceeded.

" You are now, my Lord," said he, " informed of all I know respecting the youth ; and I suppose you will depart from hence in a few days. I would presume to advise you not to let Lorenzo, in the meanwhile, perceive that you have learned any thing concerning him ; and moreover, be particularly guarded in your expressions of friendship to him while you remain in the convent. But the moment you arrive at your castle, I entreat you to write to the Marchese, and tell him to hasten to claim his son."

" Hark !" cried the Count.

The

The Monk listened, and plainly heard a door open, and receding steps sound along the passage. Extremely alarmed, he gazed on the door of the chamber, expecting every moment to behold it uncloset. A profound silence, however, presently ensued; but the Father was too much agitated by the circumstance, to remain long in the apartment: nor could Guidoni object to his departure, though he seriously wished the Monk to suppress his fears, and to answer the several questions he had to propose.

“I will leave the lamp here, Signor,” said the Father. “I can find my way in the dark. I will seek another opportunity of answering your demands. Permit me now to withdraw.”

The Monk hastily quitted the chamber, leaving the Count to indulge the pleasing certainty of having been perfectly right in his conjectures.

CHAP. VI.

THE early matin bell awoke the Count from a short slumber. He quickly arose; and having dressed himself, left the chamber, with the intention of going into the chapel; but unacquainted with the long passages it was necessary to pass through for that purpose, he was on the point of endeavouring to find his way to the refectory, when, turning a short angle, he encountered Lorenzo.

“How fortunate!” exclaimed the Count.

“How long has the bell struck?”

“Only a few minutes,” replied the youth.

“Accom

“Accompany me, then, for an instant, to my chamber,” said Guidoni, forgetful of the caution he had received from the Monk. “I wish to ask you a most important question.”

Lorenzo complied with the request; and they were both immediately in the apartment appropriated to the Count.

“My agitation and eagerness alarm you,” cried Guidoni; “but suppress your surprise, and satisfy me in one point. If I do not mistake, you once informed me that you was about three years of age, when the Abbot took you under his protection.”

“I imagine I was about that age,” returned the youth.

“Do you retain any recollection of circumstances prior to that event?” demanded the Count.

“O yes,” answered Lorenzo, with emotion; “but why these enquiries?—For Heaven’s sake, Count, keep me not in
suspense

suspense—Have you learned aught concerning me?”

“Were you always called by the name of Lorenzo?” enquired Guidoni.

“No,” returned the former. “I perfectly recollect being caressed by a lady and a cavalier, both of whom called me Vivonio; and so indelibly is the recollection of their fondness engraven on my heart, that neither time, nor change of circumstances, have been able to weaken the impression. Even to this moment, I also recollect my infant terrors, on finding myself suddenly in the power of a savage and ferocious-looking fellow, who beat me cruelly for refusing to answer to any other name than that of Vivonio.”

As it was now impossible for a shadow of doubt to exist in the mind of Guidoni, his joy deprived him of utterance, and he embraced his friend in silent, though visible emotion.

Lorenzo, whose mind was agonized with eager curiosity, repeatedly entreated the
Count

Count to explain the reason of his earnest inquiries; but before the latter had regained sufficient composure to reply, the ceasing of the matin bell reminded Lorenzo of his lengthened stay. Starting towards the door, he rushed from the apartment, and Guidoni had only time to desire him to return as speedily as possible, ere he disappeared down the dark passages.

The Count had not been many minutes waiting his return, when Lorenzo re-entered the apartment.

“The service is begun,” said he, “and as I am not particularly wanted, I shall not now attend. I beseech you, Count Guidoni, reveal to me, while there is an opportunity, what you know relative to me or my family.”

The Count, feeling no apprehension of being interrupted, briefly recounted to the youth all the particulars he had learned from the Monk: and as the recollection Lorenzo retained of the name bestowed on

him in infancy, had corroborated the testimony of the dying Lopez, his identity was, in the opinion of Guidoni, fully established ; he, therefore, dwelt with animation on the virtues of the Marchese di Romanzini, in whom his young friend was to behold a father.

Lorenzo appeared not so much surprised as overjoyed at the intelligence he had received ; and with a countenance glowing with mingled delight and gratitude, he listened to the arrangements the Count proposed for his immediate emancipation.

The idea of quitting the convent without Lorenzo, the Count could not endure. He feared that before proper steps could be taken to restore the young man to his family, he might be placed beyond the reach of his friends. The Abbot, if really aiding the design of some concealed enemy to the noble house of Di Orenza and Di Romanzini, could not fail to regard, with the suspicion ever attached to guilt, the
inter-

interference of a stranger, whose conduct and professions had evinced a wish of providing for the youth, agreeable to his inclinations; and, in such case, it was more than probable that the latter might not only be compelled to take the vows, but removed to some spot, to which it might be impossible to trace him, or where he would never more be heard of.

These reflections alarmed the Count, and determined him to devise some plan for the escape of Lorenzo, from an abode which he deemed it no longer safe for him to remain in: but as no scheme for this purpose could be immediately arranged, and as Lorenzo could not visit the apartment of the Count by night, it was agreed to confide this intention to, and to consult with, Father Pedro, the friendly Monk, whose advice and assistance might be necessary, and who could, with less danger, leave his cell on the same hour as on the preceding night.

The Count and his friend endeavoured
to

to assume an appearance of composure very foreign to their real feelings; and on a message from the Abbot, each proceeded to the refectory, with an air of tranquillity and unconcern.

After breakfast the Abbot led the Count to the library, which displayed a collection of rare and well-selected authors; many very ancient and beautifully illuminated manuscripts were there also carefully preserved. When Guidoni had surveyed this spacious repository of ancient and modern literature, he ceased to wonder at the extensive knowledge Lorenzo had acquired.

Here the Superior requested the Count to amuse himself, till the hour of dinner, and then quitted the room.

In vain Guidoni turned over pages of divinity and history; his thoughts were too deeply engaged by the recent discovery, to permit him to avail himself of the indulgence of the Abbot. It was in these moments of solitude and silence, that he

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began to reflect on the impropriety of his accompanying the newly found Vivonio to Orenza. Might he not arrive there at the very hour on which the nuptials of Ferdinand and Rosalia were celebrated?—This idea gave the Count a pang of bitter agony. Rosalia, at present, was the heiress of an immense property ; and though *she* valued not unbounded wealth, still the Count Alvanio, he knew, regarded it as essentially necessary to the aggrandizement of his son ; the sudden appearance, therefore, of the long lost Vivonio, would create a wonderful change in the sentiments of the Count. This surmise darted into the mind of Guidoni, and he conceived the hope that this unexpected circumstance would prevent those dreaded nuptials ; but the recollection that Rosalia regarded Ferdinand with the warmest affection, almost instantly returned, and renewed his despair. If they should already be united, thought Guidoni, they will be happy, though the Count Alvanio should repine. Tenderly attached

to each other, the diminution of fortune will make no alteration in the hearts of Ferdinand and Rosalia; they will rather rejoice in the felicity of the Marchese; and Vivonio cannot fail of securing their affection and esteem.

The disinterested love of Guidoni occasioned him to experience a faint pleasure in contemplating the happiness of Rosalia; and he almost persuaded himself into an opinion, that as the wife of his friend, he should behold her without danger to his future peace. He did not, however, hesitate to resolve on making as limited a stay at Orenza as possible. Had not his presence there been indispensibly necessary to the interests of Vivonio, Guidoni, diffident of his own fortitude, would, on no other account, have ventured to see Rosalia again.

Harrassed by contending emotions, the Count continued in deep reflection, till he was roused from his reveries by the

entrance of one of the Monks, who came to summon him to dinner.

Mechanically the Count followed the Father to the apartment of the Abbot, where an elegant dinner, in compliment to the noble guest, had just been served.

Guidoni perceived that Vivonio was not present, the Abbot and four of the elder Monks only being of the party. Chagrined and displeased with a parade which effectually prevented his seeing the youth, the Count became pensive and taciturn; and the Abbot could not but perceive that an entertainment less formal would have been more pleasing: however, the natural urbanity and politeness of the Count would not permit him to appear dissatisfied with the attentions of the Superior; and he endeavoured to assume an appearance of cheerfulness, and to join in the general conversation.

Dinner being ended, Guidoni was agreeably surprised by the entrance of Vivonio,

to whom the Abbot behaved with his accustomed gentleness of manner, and even requested him, should it prove agreeable, to shew the Count a hermit's cell, curiously formed in a rock on the South side of the valley.

Guidoni was secretly delighted with this proposal, while Vivonio gladly caught at the given permission; and shortly after, the friends set out on their excursion: but the Count was again disappointed in his hope of privately conversing with the youth; for they had not proceeded many steps from the convent, when they encountered several of the Monks, who were, apparently by chance, wandering the same way.

Amongst the groupe, the Count perceived the Monk, who, on the preceding day, had been his conductor to San Jerome. He seemed just to have joined the party; and on seeing the Count, he approached, and informed him, that his servants were arrived at the convent, whither his Superior,

rior, fearing that they were very indifferently accommodated at the cottage, had ordered him to conduct them.—“The mules,” continued the Monk, “are still under the care of the old woman, it being impossible to give them shelter here. I have to acquaint you also, Signor,” he added, “that one of your servants wishes to return. It seems the desire of paying his duty to you, and personally learning the state of your health, alone induced him to leave the cot.”

Guidoni, convinced that he should not, for the present, find an opportunity of speaking in private to Vivonio, declined proceeding on the walk, and returned with the latter to the convent, where he found his two attendants, Michelli and Carloni. The former, after having been well feasted, was conducted back to the cottage, while Carloni remained to attend on his Lord.

Continually under the observation of the Monks, the Count, with chagrin, saw the hours glide away, without the least prospect
of

of speaking to Vivonio ; and his vexation was extreme, at being compelled to retire to his chamber, while uncertain whether Father Pedro would repeat his nocturnal visit.

Carlioni attended the Count to his apartment ; but instead of waiting as usual the commands of his Lord, he looked carefully round the room, and having fastened the door, he, in a low tone, informed the Count he had something particular to say.

The Count commanded him to speak, and Carlioni, with an air of mystery and importance, began—

“ Some time before the Father Abbot and you, Signor, sat down to supper,” said he, “ I was talking to the old porter, at the convent gate, when one of the Monks passed us several times, and at last made a sign to me to follow him. I got off as well as I could, and stole after the Father into the chapel. Two lamps were burning before a shrine, and there was just light enough to see that nobody was

there but our own selves. Well, Signor, the Monk drew me into the darkest part, and then, putting his hand on my shoulder, he said, in a low whisper—‘ Can you be secret and faithful ?’

‘ My *Signor* never doubted me yet,’ answered I, not very well pleased at his seeming to suspect me of being false : but then, to be sure, he did not know what a master I had ; if he could have guessed how kind you are, Signor, why then——.”

“ Proceed—Proceed with your information,” cried the Count impatiently.

“ Well, Signor,” resumed Carloni, “ I suppose the Monk thought he had vexed me enough, for he did not ask me that question again. If he had——.”

The Count turned away half angry.

Carloni instantly recollected himself, and proceeded with his communication.

“ The Monk, Signor,” said he, “ bid me tell you that he could not come to you to-night ; but that your *friend* would be
with

with you after midnight prayers; and he also bid me say, that if you did not speak very low, and take care to send him away before the morning dawned, all would be discovered. Now, Signor," continued Carloni, "I hope you will not be angry; but as this happened before Michelli went away, and as I could not help thinking that your friend in this convent could be no other than Signor Lorenzo, and that you were contriving how to get him away, for fear of his being made a Monk of—why I told Michelli to keep the mules in proper order for travelling at a moment's warning."

"Your imprudence has ruined all!—Who was present when you gave such orders?" anxiously demanded the Count.

"Saint Jerome defend me!" cried Carloni. "Why, Signor, who should be present, but Michelli himself? Do you think I did not take good care of that?—Ay, ay, there's no danger of being found out. Why, old Marcella never goes into

the shed where the mules are kept ; and if she did, she would only help any scheme for getting Signor Lorenzo off. Ah !” continued Carloni, “ she may well like him ; he has saved her life, and given her all the little comforts she has had for some years. But what do you think, Signor, old Marcella told me beside. She said that Signor Lorenzo was obliged to bind himself, by a dreadful oath, to the Abbot, before he could get permission to visit her, that he would never bring any stranger to the convent, unless the Abbot first invited them himself ; and she said that was but seldom the case, as the Superior rarely asks any one to the convent that cannot pay well for it : and as for Signor Lorenzo, if he had ever wanted to run away, he could not, for Marcella told me that there was a vile wicked-looking fellow, that for a long time used to watch his steps, and cross his paths, three or four times a-day : but this fellow disappeared some months ago, and nobody knows what is become

become of him. He used to be the terror of all the peasants that saw him. Some think he is dead; others that he hides himself amongst the rocks in the valley; and—Hark! Signor, there's the bell for midnight service—How late it is!—You did not remark the time, Signor, you sat with the Abbot after supper, and yet the Monk, who shewed Michelli his way back to the cottage, returned before you quitted the parlour. I once thought that this same San Jerome was a good distance from the cot; but this morning Marcella told me there was some dismal dreary way leading to it, that cut off a great deal of the length. I suppose she meant that gloomy valley. Mercy on us! what a place it is!—How shall we get away!—Such flights of steps, and——”

Carlioni would have run on for an hour, had not the Count commanded his silence. The expectation of a visit from Vivonio, and the former various projects to effect his escape, so entirely occupied the

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thoughts

thoughts of Guidoni, that his servant might have continued a much longer time uninterrupted, had not the latter suddenly elevated his voice, and by so doing, roused the Count from his reverie.

The moon shone full into the chamber; and, for the first time, Guidoni opened the casement, to examine whether there appeared any possibility of Vivonio's making his escape that way.

The prospect was by no means flattering to the hopes of the Count. Just beneath he perceived a steep declivity, covered with dwarf trees, and the wild shrubs of the mountains. Guidoni rightly conjectured that the valley lay at the foot of this tremendous precipice; the narrow ridge of which extended along the side of the convent, rendering any approach to the edifice, by its almost perpendicular ascent, impracticable.

The Count sighed as he surveyed the steep and gloomy depths; nor were his sensations more pleasing, when he raised his

his eyes to the snowy summits of the lofty mountains. Thoughtfully he continued to meditate, till recollecting that his servant was still in the chamber, and that to detain him longer, would, if known, appear strange to the Monks, he ordered Carloni to withdraw, after having enjoined him to be particularly cautious in his discourse, lest any thing should transpire, which might create suspicion of his design.

Carloni faithfully promised to be circumspect, and withdrew. The Count had been but a few minutes alone, when he heard the Monks retiring to their cells. A profound silence quickly succeeded, and Vivonio soon made his appearance in the habit of the order.

Guidoni, extremely alarmed at the sight, faintly articulated—"Are we discovered?"

"I fear we are," replied Vivonio. "I am unwilling to trespass on your friendship; yet there is but one way to elude the designs of my persecutor."

"Oh, name it!" eagerly cried the Count.

"Will

“ Will you accompany me instantly in my flight ?” enquired Vivonio.

“ Undoubtedly,” replied Guidoni.

Vivonio immediately opened the casement.

“ Impossible !—Softly !” exclaimed the Count. “ You cannot proceed this way.”

“ If you disapprove of the attempt, I resign it,” said Vivonio mournfully.

“ Will it not be attended with instant death ?” asked the Count.

“ Banish that idea,” returned Vivonio. “ I am well acquainted with the path—Dare you venture ?”

“ The Count, whose only fear was for the youth, instantly approached the window. Vivonio descended in a moment, and was then followed by the Count, who, to his infinite surprise, soon found that his apprehensions for the safety of his friend had magnified the danger of the enterprise.

With extreme care they stole softly along the edge of the precipice, and, at length,

length, turned the eastern angle of the building. A flight of stone steps lay on this side, which having hastily descended, they entered the valley.

Guidoni, fearful of pursuit, threw a momentary glance towards the dark turrets of the convent, but no lights were visible; the usual solemn silence reigned around.

The Count's steps kept pace with the rapid ones of Vivonio, who observed a profound silence all the way; and in a quarter of an hour they reached the cottage.

"We will not alarm Marcella," whispered Vivonio. "The mules are in the shed, and I can enter."

Vivonio found the door of the shed fastened; but after several efforts, he obtained an entrance; and to his extreme surprise perceived that the mules were ready, and Michelli sleeping in an obscure corner. An old lamp was suspended from a beam, and its faint glimmering light just served to render the objects within distinguishable.

The

The Count immediately roused Michelli, who, starting on his feet, uttered an exclamation of surprise ; but instantly recollecting his Lord, he enquired his commands. Bring out the mules, ordered Guidoni. The servant hastened to obey, and having unfastened the animals, he led them out of the shed. The Count and Vivonio mounted in haste, and proceeded on the journey, followed by Michelli, who was not a little grieved at leaving old Marcella so abruptly. He comforted himself, however, by reflecting on the noble present the Count had made her on the day he accompanied the Monk to the convent.

The travellers descended a rugged declivity of the mountain, as speedily as the mules could proceed ; and before the morning dawned, they had travelled several leagues, the Count and Vivonio still preserving a silence, seldom interrupted but by remarks on the road.

At length Vivonio enquired what course they were proceeding ?

“ The

“The nearest way to Guidoni Castle,” replied the Count.

“We shall be pursued thither!” exclaimed Vivonio, alarmed.

“I do not doubt it,” returned Guidoni. “Yet we shall be effectually secured from the attempts of our pursuers, by the fidelity of my domestics; besides, we will not remain there above a few hours. I am confident that if we proceed to Saluzzo, or Nice, you will be more easily secured at either place, than at the castle.”

Vivonio submitted to the judgment of the Count, and about mid-day the travellers reached the enchanting valley of Guidoni.

The richest cultivation smiled over the verdant plains that surrounded the castle, which stood on a gentle eminence, covered with varied plantations and luxuriant gardens; all of which gave a just idea of the taste and elegance that presided in the directions of the owner.

Vivonio, accustomed from intimacy to
the

the most wild and terrific passes of the Alps, where nature appeared in her most awful aspect, expressed an unbounded admiration of this spot.

An amphitheatre of pine-covered hills enclosed three sides of the valley ; behind which the snowy tops of the Alps formed a long range of fantastic and sublime images. Towards the South, the lengthened vista opened to prospects of the neat little hamlet dependent on the castle, and the distant and luxuriant plains of Piedmont. The white cottages of the peasants of Guidoni displayed, in their peculiar neatness, and air of comfort, the generosity and humanity of their Lord.

The travellers continued their way for about a quarter of a mile, by the side of a small clear rivulet, that, winding through the valley, almost encircled the eminence on which the castle stood, and flowed in a broader current through a plantation of olives.

At the gate of the castle stood the ancient
steward,

steward, and the rest of the domestics, whose joy at the sight of their Lord was mingled with concern, on beholding the paleness of his countenance.

The moment the Count and Vivonio, followed by Michelli, entered the court, the former ordered the gate to be fastened, and no strangers to be admitted on any pretence whatever.

The first command was immediately obeyed; and the Count too well knew the fidelity of his domestics, to doubt their strict observance of the latter.

Having conducted Vivonio to a remote apartment, the Count ordered refreshments to be immediately served there; and while a light repast was preparing, Guidoni wrote the letter to the Marchese, which apprised him of the recovery of his long-lost son. When the Count had finished writing, he presented the epistle to Vivonio, who gratefully approved of all his friend had written, except the high encomiums lavished on himself. Had Vivonio
been

been permitted to obey the first impulse of his heart, his own hand had communicated the happy tidings to his revered parent ; but the suggestions of prudence, joined to the advice of Guidoni, quickly made him relinquish the filial wish.

The packet being prepared, a faithful domestic was dispatched with it to Orenza Castle.

The Count and Vivonio now partook of refreshments, and immediately after repaired to the apartments of the former ; where Vivonio was soon equipped in a plain, but elegant habit, belonging to Guidoni, who disguised himself in the garb of a servant.

“ This transformation,” said the Count, smiling, “ will help to mislead our pursuers, who, if I mistake not, must have lost several hours in procuring mules, should the Abbot have ordered a pursuit. Besides, the retired passes through which we travelled, are so very little known, that they may possibly be compelled to take a more circuitous

circuitous route to the castle. However we must not rely on conjectures, but recommence our journey in less than an hour; and if we are fortunate enough to reach Genoa unmolested, we can hire a vessel from thence to Cevitta Vecchia, and thus completely elude pursuit. In my early rambles amongst the surrounding mountains," continued the Count, "I have explored many rude recesses and caverns almost unknown; and where, should danger press while in these parts, we might conceal ourselves for a day or two, without much injury to health, as I shall take care that our sumpter mule shall be well provided."

The Count had scarcely ceased speaking, when the ancient steward entered, and delivered to him the letter of Ferdinand.

Guidoni, glancing his eye on the superscription, instantly recognized the handwriting of his friend; and having looked his apology to Vivonio, with trembling haste he tore open the letter: but little did he expect to receive, instead of an invitation

invitation to the nuptials of Rosalia, the blissful assurance that they would never take place.

Surprise, joy, and wonder, were now painted in the expressive features of the Count. Vivonio beheld the change, with an amazement almost equal to that experienced by the former; but too delicate to seek an explanation of the cause, he remained silent. Guidoni, rather recovered from the violence of his first emotions, observed the polite forbearance of Vivonio; but however highly he regarded him, he could not determine to acquaint him with the contents of the important letter.

“ Pardon me, my friend,” cried the Count, addressing Vivonio, with an air of the liveliest friendship, “ and do not attribute my present reserve to want of confidence. At some future period you shall know why I am thus agitated. At this time, spare me a communication which honour will not permit me to make.”

Vivonio,

Vivonio, convinced that the Count's wish of concealing the intelligence, which had so sensibly affected him, arose from the most virtuous motives, would scarcely hear an apology; and when he could speak without interrupting the former, he expressed, in animated terms, the satisfaction he felt, in witnessing the joyful effects the letter had produced.

Guidoni's impatience to commence the journey to Orenza was now heightened. His domestics were summoned into his presence, to receive instructions for their conduct, should the Abbot of San Jerome send any of his people to make enquiries at the castle.

"To whoever may enquire, say, you are not authorised to give them any answer to their questions—and hold as little converse with strangers as possible," was the general order then given.

The Count next ordered three excellent mules to be expeditiously prepared for the journey; two for the use of himself and

Vivonio,

Vivonio, and the third to be laden with provisions and provender.

In vain Michelli, and several other faithful domestics, supplicated their beloved Lord's permission to attend him ; the Count being of opinion, that himself and his companion would run less hazard of discovery, by travelling unattended, than if he permitted a suite, his servants being personally known to the peasantry for several miles round.

In a short time every thing was ready for the departure of the Count and Vivonio ; and the domestics assembled in the hall to offer their respectful and sincere wishes for the safety of their beloved young Lord.

Michelli endeavoured to restrain his tears as he held the bridle of the Count's mule, yet he could not forbear lamenting his lot, as peculiarly hard, in being denied the privilege of sharing the dangers to which he persuaded himself his dear Lord and Signor Lorenzo were going to expose themselves ;

themselves ; silyly hinting to the group who had followed the steps of the Count and Vivonio, that he dared to say Carloni was more favoured, as he supposed *he* was hiding some where about to follow his master.

Vivonio, who overheard the curious assertion of the simple Michelli, instantly recollected that poor Carloni had been left at San Jerome ; and uneasy at the idea of the servant's being exposed to the rage of the Abbot, he intimated his apprehension on that subject to Guidoni, who was surprised at the fears of his friend.

“ I have given orders to Francisco, my steward,” said the Count, “ to dispatch Michelli, and three or four of the other domestics, to San Jerome to-morrow. I imagine the Abbot will not resist the request, which will be conveyed to him, for the liberation of my servant, should he have detained him, which possibly may be the case : and though it is equally possible he may now refuse to let the poor fellow

leave the convent, yet he will not dare to treat him with severity. On our arrival in Italy, all must be investigated by the Marchese, when the Abbot will be compelled to account for all his iniquitous proceedings."

The Count and Vivonio now bade adieu to the regretting domestics of the former; and, quitting the spacious court, they descended into the valley by a narrow path, which ran through the plantations.

The evening was far advanced;—the moon rose in silent splendour over the pine-clad mountains, and served to guide the travellers through the lonely defiles, and rocky ascents, that intersected their way.

Having ascended a steep and rugged height, Vivonio turned to take a parting view of the delightful plains of Guidoni. Low in the valley the white cottages of the hamlet were distinctly seen by the clear moonlight, a partial beam of which shone on the grey turrets of the castle, and
illuminated

illuminated the lofty window of the eastern tower.

This enchanting view was soon lost amidst the dark shade of over-hanging pines that veiled their path.

Desolate and solemn scenes succeeded, as the friends silently pursued their way, each expecting, at every rocky angle, to encounter the lurking banditi stealing from his gloomy retreat.

At length the rising dawn released them from all idea of the straggling hordes that infested the mountains and valleys, and security from pursuit again became the most essential concern. The day, however, passed over without the travellers having seen a human form, except each other's; and on the approach of evening the Count proposed seeking some spot convenient for repose.

The sun had sunk beneath the western wave, when they came to a small spring, which issued from a range of rocks, and which was partly concealed by the wild

shrubs and moss that overspread the spot from whence it flowed—a projection of the rock formed a natural arch over the recess, which lay at a small distance from the almost untrod path.

Here the Count and Vivonio determined to rest for a few hours, and having dismounted from their mules, they led the weary animals to the little rivulet formed by the spring; and then spread their own provisions on a part of the moss-covered seat, which nature had provided at the foot of the rock.

“You are doubtless surprised,” said the Count to Vivonio, after they had finished their repast, “at my not having yet enquired why you found it expedient to make so precipitate a retreat from San Jerome; my forbearance did not originate in want of curiosity, but every moment was precious, and I deferred hearing your explanation only till we should arrive at some secret spot, where I might attentively listen to your relation.”

“I was

“I was perfectly aware of your motive, Count,” replied Vivonio, “and therefore continued silent on the subject; but before I can clearly explain the cause of my late alarm, it will be necessary to relate several occurrences of my early years; and as this would occupy some time, I must beg your indulgence until we reach a place of greater security than I imagine the present to be.”

Guidoni readily admitted the prudential caution of his friend; and the short time they remained in the recess was devoted to repose.

When they awoke, the moon had been some time risen, and the Count proposed immediate departure; and having mounted their mules, the travellers proceeded on their journey.

It is needless to relate the many difficulties they encountered on their way; suffice it, that they had the good fortune to reach Genoa in safety, where the Count hired a vessel exclusively for him-

self and his friend, to convey them to Ce-
vitta Vecchia.

CHAP. VII.

THE weather was extremely favourable, and after a few hours stay at Genoa, the Count and Vivonio embarked. They had not proceeded many leagues to sea, when the latter, in compliance with the wish of Guidoni, commenced his promised recital.

“I have already informed you, Count,” said the interesting youth, “that from the time I was received into the convent, I was treated by the Abbot and the brothers, with all imaginable care and attention; and,

and, till I was about twelve years old, I was tolerably contented with my situation, attached to my preceptors, and receiving with avidity their instructive lessons.

“ Amongst the monks, there was one called Father Ansaldo, whose innate goodness of heart, and humane principles, will long be remembered by the community, and equally so by the peasantry in the vicinity of the convent. This truly pious man devoted every hour he could spare from his religious duties, to the cultivation of the few talents I possessed ; a task to which profound learning, and a superior understanding rendered him fully adequate.

“ The Father had studied medicine with infinite attention, and, as most of his remedies were simple, the wild shrubs and herbage of the mountains formed a considerable portion of his study. In the delightful employment of culling these shrubs and herbs, I was permitted to attend my kind preceptor, and soon became as well

acquainted with their various properties as himself, while my ardour was rewarded by his instructing me in the more abstract points of the science.

“Frequently in our rambles we encountered a man of a singularly ferocious and suspicious aspect; all the peasantry feared and shunned him, wherever he appeared; and it was reported, he seemed equally desirous of avoiding them. I never met him, but his hated side-long leer struck terror to my youthful heart; and though I had never seen the man who conveyed me from the loved habitation of my parents, from the night on which I was exposed at the convent gate, yet on seeing this stranger, a fearful idea rushed into my mind, that he was the very person.

“I had entered my thirteenth year, when this man made his first appearance near San Jerome, since which period, until within these three months, I never once quitted the convent, without meeting that hideous figure; but in all our encounters
he

he never made the slightest attempt to speak to me ; and I experienced a degree of horror and repugnance at the sight of him, that would have effectually deterred me from accosting him, could I have found an opportunity, which I imagine would have been impossible, as he seldom remained above a minute in my view ; yet I observed, he unceasingly watched my steps."

" Did you ever mention to Father Ansaldo the recollection you retained of your parents ?" enquired the Count.

" Oh, my complaints on that subject," resumed Vivonio, " commenced on my first entrance into the convent, but they were totally disregarded by the Abbot, who ever assured me, I had no parents living, while he strove, by indulgent kindness, to reconcile me to my situation ; persisting in calling me Lorenzo, a name I should never have acknowledged, but for the soothing remonstrances, and affectionate caresses of Father Ansaldo, who quickly
1 5 acquired

acquired the power of bending my disposition to his will. Repeatedly he listened to my infantile tales of sorrow, and, with a father's tenderness, endeavoured to alleviate my griefs, but never once encouraged in me the hope of my parents being still alive; and when, on my recognizing, as I imagined, in the terrific stranger, the ruffian who stole me from my early home, I revealed my ideas to him, he combated what he termed my romantic suspicions, with energetic reasoning, and plausible argument; till, at length, I confined my conjectures and my griefs to my own bosom.

“At the age of sixteen I had the misfortune to lose this valued friend; and from that moment I considered the convent as a dreary prison, from which I should long since have endeavoured to escape, had not a solemn promise, required of me by my dying friend, prevented the attempt.

“The night previous to the decease of Ansaldo, as I sat watching beside his bed,

he conjured me to promise never to quit the convent, unless I should discover I had parents still in being, and if so, to be well assured they would receive me with affection, before I attempted such a step.—‘ If no such circumstance as the former should occur, before you have attained the age of twenty-three, you will then,’ continued the venerable man, ‘ be more sensible of the comforts of your present situation than you now are. Let no *appearances* tempt you to think evil of the Abbot—you may one day learn that he feels the truest interest in your happiness ; and remember, do not indulge the supposition that the man who you imagine haunts your paths, has any connexion with your destiny. Do not be communicative to strangers ; and, above all, do not utter the name of *Vivonio*, nor mention the recollection you retain of your parents, to any person whatever, though he should seem most worthy of your confidence.’

“ These strange injunctions, delivered

with solemn earnestness, filled me with astonishment and sorrow. The nature of the charge convinced me that my worthy friend was, in some respects, acquainted with the mystery attached to my circumstances, and that he had now spoke thus freely, from an inward certainty of being speedily removed from this sublunary sphere ; but in vain I conjured the Father to reveal whatever secret he might have learned respecting me, and I was at length compelled to cease my entreaties, through the agonizing conviction, that by them I was disturbing the last hour of my expiring friend.

“ For several weeks after the death of Ansaldo, I continued in deep affliction ; and the Abbot, in the hope of restoring my tranquillity, permitted me to wander alone over the wild mountains, where I had so often accompanied my lamented friend.

“ In one of my solitary excursions I called at the cottage of Marcella, which, for the
several

several succeeding years, continued to be the limits of my rambles; the Abbot still allowing me the liberty of going out alone, on condition that I never freely conversed with any strangers I might chance to meet with, or conducted them to the convent.

“ These restrictions I carefully observed, though the former, from the similarity it bore to the last injunctions of my dying friend, only kept my suspicions alive, and was, of course, a subject of perplexity; and to the latter I was compelled, by respect to the Abbot. Many opportunities occurred to me in my lonely walks, of rendering trifling services to travellers, whom illness or accident had compelled to seek shelter in the cottage of Marcella; but I never was sufficiently interested by any person, till I beheld you, Count Guidoni, to make me desirous of confiding my tale to their friendship, could I have dispensed with my promises to Ansaldo and the Abbot.

“ Notwithstanding you were so indifferently

rently accommodated in the cottage, I could not conquer an unaccountable repugnance I felt to mentioning the circumstance to the Abbot; and had he not accidentally discovered your situation, and temporary residence, it is very probable you would never have visited San Jerome, as a singular incident had occurred some time previous to your arrival, which had rendered the Superior particularly circumspect in admitting strangers.

“ I had been out attending a poor traveller, who lay ill at the cottage, and did not return till late. The night was rather dark, but as I advanced to the small arch, cut through the rock, and under which you passed, to ascend the steps that led to the convent, I observed two mules fastened to a low branch of oak. This circumstance led me to conjecture that some strangers had sought shelter for the night in the convent. Impressed with this idea, I ascended the steps, and not finding the porter at the gate, passed on. The door of the parlour
where

where the Abbot usually receives strangers, was not closed, and as I approached, I heard my name repeated in a low voice several times.

“ I am ashamed to acknowledge that my surprise and curiosity triumphed over propriety, and, as I stood irresolute at the door, I heard the person, who had previously pronounced my name, say, that the silence of Vanilla had caused him to imagine that he was no more ; and that that idea had induced him to hasten to the convent.—‘ It will be impossible,’ continued the stranger, ‘ to appoint another watch equally faithful ; and therefore, holy Father, you must use your utmost endeavours to compel Lorenzo to pronounce the vows. I do not blame the liberty you allow him, but I think you should be extremely circumspect.’

‘ I will pledge my life, Signor, on the young man’s honour,’ returned the Abbot. ‘ The cottage I just now spoke of, is the utmost limit of his walks, and he constantly
returns

returns at the hour appointed. Permit me to continue the same indulgent measures I have hitherto used, and I will venture to affirm, that his affection for me will induce him to take the vows, and preclude the necessity of employing compulsion.'

'Perhaps so, holy Father,' replied the stranger; 'but unless this end is speedily attained, he shall be removed from this to some other convent, where the Superior may not be so dilatory in doing his duty, nor so blind to the interest of our holy church.'

"At that moment one of the Monks, advancing with a light up the passage, obliged me to retreat. I hastened to my cell, where, bewildered with astonishment and terror, I almost fancied that all I had just heard was the effect of a disordered imagination. The entrance of a Monk restored my recollection. Surprised at my visible emotion, he asked how long I had been returned, and whether any thing
particu-

particularly distressing had occurred at the cottage?

“As I was not very partial to this man, I replied, that nothing material had happened; and then accompanied him to the refectory, where I found the Abbot and the monks assembled to supper.

“The Superior, regarding me attentively, enquired, ‘when I had returned?’

“Withheld by a dread of the consequences of mentioning the exact time, I replied, ‘only a few minutes.’

‘Did you meet a stranger in the valley?’ eagerly asked the Abbot.

“I answered in the negative, and no more questions were asked.

“The silence now observed by the Superior, encreased the unfavourable opinion I had begun to entertain of his integrity; and ceasing to respect him, I became fearless of offending. With as unconcerned an air as I could assume, I enquired whether any stranger had, that evening, visited the convent, and was answered, that

a cava-

a cavalier had just called to request a direction through the valley ; and though repeatedly pressed by the Abbot to pass the night in the convent, he had insisted on proceeding on his journey.

“ Whatever doubts the remains of esteem for the Abbot inclined me to entertain, were, by this apparent subterfuge, converted into certainty. It was necessary, however, for me to be silent on the subject that had caused me so much alarm, as I had reason to apprehend that my confessing a knowledge of the object which had occasioned the stranger’s visit, would serve only to incense the Abbot, and procure a prohibition of my rambles.

“ On the following day, I was compelled to listen to a solemn exhortation from the Abbot, to prepare to take the vows, and which I answered only with a request, to be allowed a few months to decide on this point.

“ To this the Superior, with evident reluctance, agreed.

“The

“The state of my mind, at this period, was more dreadful than I can describe. The dissimulation I now found it expedient to practise, rendered me odious in my own eyes; and yet it would have been the height of imprudence, to have revealed to the Abbot the purport of the conference I had so accidentally overheard, since such a communication would have accelerated the event I so much dreaded.

“Having fixed an unalterable determination never to take the vows, my mind gradually became more tranquil. My apparent serenity and resignation threw the Abbot off his guard, and I was still permitted to make my daily excursions.

“You will doubtless blame my having concealed from the Superior, the invincible repugnance I felt to a monastic life, and I allow I did not act with proper candour on this occasion. It was, however, my intention to acquaint the Abbot with the discovery I had made, when the day should arrive, on which I was expected to
give

give my decision respecting my entering into the Order.

“ The Superior continued to treat me with his usual kindness ; but still it was evident that the stranger’s threat of removing me to another convent had intimidated, and, it was probable, would yet stimulate him to have recourse to compulsory means, if he found me resolved to oppose the measure to which he had been incited. This painful reflection, joined to the certainty I now had of my fate being predetermined, by an unknown persecutor, have frequently tempted me to fly from the convent ; but the promise I had so incautiously made to the dying Ansaldo, still bound me to the spot, and I resigned myself to the idea of encountering the rage of my enemies. Yet never did that imprudent promise affect me so much, as at the period of your recovery. Your noble and generous friendship offered me liberty and independence ; and though I felt that I could never accept pecuniary favours, I
bitterly

bitterly regretted that it was no longer in my power to fly from my irksome prison ; but the solemn promise which detained me there, became void on the morning when you first intimated to me your knowledge of my revered father. You, my friend, have assured me that the Marchese and his amiable family will receive me with unbounded joy. Oh, Guidoni, how inadequate are words to express the rapture that fills my heart, as I anticipate the parental embrace ! and while smiling fancy represents my sister, and my friends, rejoicing in my return, oh, bounteous Providence ! render me worthy of the felicity that opens to my view ! Pardon my emotion, Count ; I am unused to contemplate such prospects of happiness."

" Believe me, Vivonio," returned the Count, " it is impossible for you to indulge, in a more exquisite anticipation of the future, than I am inclined to do. But proceed—you have not yet informed me why

why you found it expedient to quit the convent so suddenly."

"I must first observe," said Vivonio, "that I am still a stranger to the means by which the Abbot came to hear of your residing in the cottage; however, he chid me rather severely for having concealed the circumstance, and you were immediately invited to San Jerome. But I quickly perceived that the Superior regarded the friendship you professed to feel for me, as inimical to his designs, and therefore we both were so strictly watched. The indifference with which I treated the precautions of the Abbot, seemed to abate his suspicions; and had we remained much longer at the convent, it is not improbable but that they would have totally subsided.

"On the night of my escape, I had just retired to my cell, when I was surprised by the entrance of Father Pedro. You doubtless recollect that neither of us had an
oppor-

opportunity of speaking to him in private during the day. The good Monk merely informed me that he could not visit you that night; then throwing down a habit of the Order, he desired me to put it on, and hasten to your chamber after midnight prayers; charging me also to be extremely careful to avoid being discovered, he hastily withdrew. Recollecting that one of the brothers intended to watch in solitary penance, during the night, in the chapel, I ran down the passage, after Father Pedro, to enquire of him whether Father Sebastian had yet entered the chapel?

“Father Pedro had just closed the door of his cell, as I turned the corner of the passage, and I did not dare to pursue him thither. While I stood a moment irresolute, a light suddenly issued from a wide vaulted passage, leading to the parlour, and I beheld the Abbot conducting a stranger, muffled up in a long dark cloak, into the apartment.

“An

“ An unaccountable sensation of horror thrilled through my veins at this sight. I instantly concluded this stranger to be the person whose mysterious visit, about three months before, had so much alarmed me.

“ I was within a few paces of the parlour, the door of which was closed. The idea of meanly listening was agony to my soul ; but by what other method could I arrive at a timely knowledge of the stranger's views, in case they related to myself? I advanced a step, but instantly receded. I considered that it was probable this stranger's business might not relate to me, and retired up the passage, about the middle of which, I run against some person, who seemed to be stealing along softly in the dark.

‘ Who is this?’ enquired a voice, which I immediately knew to be Father Pedro's. ‘ My lamp,’ added he, ‘ is accidentally extinguished, and I am finding my way in the dark to relight it.’

“ I immediately offered to get a light.

“ Ah,

‘Ah, ha, is it you, Lorenzo?’ whispered the Monk.—‘What do you do here?—hush!’

“At this moment the voices of the Abbot and the stranger were heard raised to a tone of disputation.

‘This concerns you,’ again whispered Pedro. ‘Come along—There’s no harm in detecting villainy—Come along, I say—Hush—Don’t breathe a syllable.’

“The Monk pulled me along the passage, and we were now near enough to the parlour door to distinguish every word that was spoken.

‘Is it possible you can have been so dilatory?’ said the stranger, whose well-remembered voice struck a chilling horror to my heart. Three months!—Permit a youth, who believes himself entirely dependant on your charity, to take *three* months to consider whether or no he will obey the commands you have such a right to enforce—Impossible!—You are deceiving me; and——’

‘Indeed, Signor, I am not,’ interrupted the Superior. ‘Severity will produce no effect on a disposition such as Lorenzo’s; nor would I, though your liberality exceeded its usual bounds, compel him to take those sacred vows against the warnings of his own conscience. You well know,’ continued the Abbot, ‘with what fidelity I have obeyed all your other instructions.’

‘Can I see the young man?’ asked the stranger, after a pause.

‘Not to-night, Signor,’ replied the Superior.

‘I do not wish to see him now,’ returned the stranger—‘I mean in the morning, Father.’

‘Undoubtedly,’ was the answer of the Abbot.

“Another pause ensued.

‘To-morrow then,’ resumed the stranger, ‘you shall, in my presence, insist on hearing his determination. Should he refuse to enter the Order, I repeat to you, holy Father,

Father, that I will immediately withdraw him from the convent.'

"The Superior sighed, and begged the stranger to well consider the consequences of such a step.

'Oh, as to the consequences,' replied the stranger, in a tone of contemptuous irony, '*the consequences* will be, that the independant and romantic spirit of this noble-minded Lorenzo will be reduced to its proper level. But I detain you, Father; my resolution is unalterable; therefore do *you* consider whether you think it prudent to forfeit the splendid reward your piety, by forcing the young man to enter that Order, for which he has been educated, will obtain.'

"Footsteps instantly moved towards the door, and Pedro hurried me down the passage, and accompanied me to my cell.

'Oh, Saint Jerome protect us!' exclaimed the Monk, when he had fastened the door, 'how fortunate that I happened to meet that assassin, Lopez Vanilla, in the

glen ! but for him I should never have been able to tell who you really are. Do not lose a moment !—Take the first opportunity to hasten to the Count Guidoni, and consult with him what is to be done.—O, if I had but suspected this about an hour ago, I could have secured the key of the arched vault, and then——Hush !—Did not you hear something ?’

“ Poor Father Pedro was now as much alarmed on his own account, as he had just before been on mine. For some minutes we listened attentively ; but all continuing silent, the Monk, after repeating his charge to me, to hasten to your chamber, and also promising to get the key he had spoken of, by means of which, if the stranger did not compel me to accompany him, I might effect an escape on the following night, through the vaults, and quickly reach the other side of the rocks, on which the convent stands, he bade me good night, and withdrew.

“ I will not, my friend, endeavour to describe

describe the violent emotions I suffered for some time, nor the anxious impatience with which I waited till the conclusion of the midnight service. Let it suffice, I came to the resolution of flying that night, if I found you inclined to accompany me. The window in the chamber which you occupied, occurred to my recollection. In my boyish days I frequently stole out that way, and was never suspected of having quitted the convent by so dangerous a method; nay, so impracticable did any attempt of the kind appear, that it was deemed unnecessary to fix bars to the windows of that room; and I may venture to assert, that when we were missed, the vaults and every private avenue of the convent were searched with the most minute care, and that that chamber remained unsuspected of affording a way to escape."

"You closed the casement I remarked, after we descended," observed the Count, "and I should imagine it could never

enter into the imagination of the Abbot, or into that of any of the Monks, that any human being could effect such an exploit on the narrow edge of that tremendous precipice. But the stranger—Did you observe his stature?—Was he tall?”

“He appeared to be above the common size, and, as he moved, his air seemed dignified; but his face and figure were so much concealed, that it would be impossible to give an accurate idea of him,” returned Vivonio.

“Conjecture is idle, and perhaps injurious,” observed Guidoni. “This mysterious affair will, however, be quickly developed. Let us be thankful to the gracious and protecting Power, who has so miraculously delivered you from the base machinations of your unknown persecutor.”

The Count added a few remarks on the recital of Vivonio, who, at length, turned the conversation by a series of enquiries respecting his own family. Guidoni spoke
of

of the Duke and Marchese with the admiration due to their virtues; and described Rosalia with all the ardour of passionate regard. Vivonio appeared charmed with this account of his relatives, and particularly so with the animated description given of his beauteous sister, for whom he already began to feel the fondest fraternal regard. Yet, however disposed he was to dwell on the subject, he perceived that the Count, after having given utterance to the first effusions of his heart, evidently shrank from the theme. This procedure surprised Vivonio, who, unacquainted with the power of love, found himself unable to penetrate into the cause; nor did it appear less inexplicable to him, on finding, that whenever he mentioned the name of Rosalia, the Count endeavoured to divert his attention to other objects.

Guidoni felt conscious, that if he dared to trust himself to dwell on the just praises of Rosalia, his emotion would not fail to

betray, even to his inexperienced friend, the genuine sentiments of his heart. The service he was now rendering Vivonio, he knew would induce him to espouse his cause with indefatigable zeal; and the Count, still uncertain of possessing the slightest regard of Rosalia, determined never to reveal his love, unless he could first indulge the hope of not being indifferent to the charming mistress of his heart. Influenced by this consideration, he sedulously avoided discoursing of her.

The friends were still conversing, when a sudden and violent heaving of the vessel interrupted their discourse: and the hurrying bustle which immediately ensued on deck, caused them to rush from the cabin, in order to learn the cause. They were quickly informed, that a sudden squall had arisen, which occasioned the noise and hurry in the sailors they now observed. This circumstance recalled to the mind of Vivonio a faint recollection of having been carried on board
a vessel,

a vessel, the night he was stolen from his parental home; and of a violent storm which soon after arose, and spread universal terror.

The sails being now reefed, and the vessel driving before the gale, the Count and Vivonio returned to the cabin, where the latter mentioned his having been before in a situation somewhat similar; but more than the foregoing particulars he could not recollect.

The wind soon abated, and the remainder of the voyage being quick, they reached Cevittia Vecchia much earlier than they had expected. Vivonio's long seclusion from the world, rendered every object he now beheld novel and interesting; but the ardent impatience he felt, to throw himself at the feet of a revered parent, would not permit him to delay a moment; and the Count being equally anxious to behold Rosalia, and also to witness the scene of joy which he

felt assured the return of Vivonio would occasion, most readily concurred in the wishes of the former.

Having travelled with the greatest expedition, the friends soon reached the castle, their reception at which has already been described.

CHAP. VIII.

IT would be impossible to give an idea of the emotions with which the Marchese and his family listened to the relation of the singular circumstances which led to the recovery of their long-regretted Vivonio ; a thousand busy conjectures agitated every bosom, yet no one could give utterance to their feelings.

Vivonio, who, with evident uneasiness, observed the silence which for some minutes reigned, entreated the Marchese to commence an immediate investigation of the Abbot of San Jerome's conduct, expressing, at the same time, a decided

repugnance to entering into society, until his birth and pretensions were authenticated beyond a doubt.

The Duke highly approved the delicacy and propriety of this determination; and the Marchese, who saw, in the conduct of his son, every thing amiable and great, was too eager to establish his claims, and to discover the base perpetrator of the atrocious crime, which had plunged the family into so many years of trouble, not to assent to the measure required by Vivonio, and even proposed an immediate departure for the purpose.

The entreaties of Vivonio to be permitted to accompany the Marchese to San Jerome were instantly rejected, and the propriety of his remaining at Orenza was so forcibly represented, that he was compelled to acquiesce in the general wish.

The offer of the Count Guidoni to attend the Marchese to the convent, was immediately accepted; and it was settled

that they should depart on the following day.

In the interval, the Marchese made the most minute enquiries of the Count and his son, respecting the mysterious stranger and the deceased Lopez Vanilla ; but the answers he received afforded him no clue whereby he could trace the author of the iniquitous transactions that had so long embittered the peace of his family.

The suspicions of the Duke and Di Romanzini naturally fixed on Sebastian, the servant of Spignola, who, after delivering the billet, which contained the false assurance of Vivonio's death, had flown so precipitately from the castle ; but this man, it was recollected, was a short robust figure ; Lopez Vanilla was represented as tall and thin.

The person and mien of the stranger, conveyed no idea of his being Spignola. But admitting the supposition of Spignola being the principal in the vile plan, it appeared

peared extremely mysterious how a man, whose circumstances had been proved to be indigent, could for years carry on a scheme, which required so much wealth to support it. It was possible, however, that Spignola might have acquired, by secret and nefarious means, the riches which enabled him to lavish such sums to procure the fidelity of the Abbot, and that of Lopez Vanilla.

The Marchese now concluded that the stranger was only an agent in the vile affair, and began to entertain hopes that he should quickly discover his employer, as there could not be a doubt of the Abbot's having it in his power to develop the whole of the plot.

Di Romanzini, with indescribable sensations, reflected, that the period had now perhaps arrived, when he should also learn the cause of his beloved wife's sudden dissolution; and the desire of avenging her loss, was added to the anxiety he experienced, respecting

respecting the discovery of the base wretches, who had so long estranged the amiable Vivonio from his family,

The Marchese proposed travelling privately, and slightly attended ; but yielding to the just fears of his family, he agreed to the attendance of a numerous suite, all well armed, and devoted to their Lord by every principle of gratitude and affection ; for that the secret enemy of Di Romanzini still existed, was now beyond doubt, and therefore it was highly proper to guard against his future machinations.

As the hour of separation drew near, the Marchese forbore to indulge in useless conjectures, and endeavoured, by his apparent cheerfulness, to disperse the pensive sadness which the idea of his approaching departure occasioned.

Rosalia beheld the preparations for the journey with apprehensive terror ; her beloved father was on the eve of hastening to encounter the deadly foe, who had so long

long harboured a rancorous hatred against him, and which had been but too plainly evinced, by the distress he had caused her family.

During the course of the evening, Guidoni, who beheld Rosalia with rapture he could scarcely conceal, endeavoured, by the most soothing representations of perfect safety, to abate her fears for the fate of the Marchese; and ventured to assure her, that his own life should be sacrificed, before any danger should reach her beloved parent. The tearful smile of grateful affection that played on the features of Rosalia, thrilled to the heart of Guidoni, and he mentally pronounced a vow, to die, if occasion required, in defence of the good Di Romanzini.

Vivonio, with keen anguish, beheld the ill-disguised apprehensions that were entertained by his lovely sister, and the Countess Alvania; and again renewed his solicitations for permission to accompany the Marchese: he even strove to create doubts

doubts of his own identity, to induce his father to yield to his importunities.

“Shall I, my Lord,” said he, while the glow of self-disapprobation suffused his cheek, “shall I rest here in security, while you, in pursuit of those who may never have injured you, expose yourself to unknown dangers? There is a possibility that I have not the happiness of being your son; but should it be clearly proved that I possess a right to call you father, how shall I despise myself for ever having consented to your undertaking this hazardous journey, without my sharing the danger? Look on Signora Rosalia, my Lord,” continued the agitated Vivonio. “I dare not yet pronounce the endearing name of *sister*. Look on the Countess Alvanio—I have observed their apprehensive concern—in pity to my feelings, allow me to attend you.”

The Marchese and the rest of the party, not one of whom entertained a doubt of Vivonio's identity, could scarcely forbear smiling

smiling at the suggestions he had so ingeniously had recourse to, to aid his design, while they admired his anxious wish of accompanying his father through the apprehended perils of the journey.

“Do you not consider, Vivonio,” said the Marchese, “that you would be infinitely more likely to experience the rage of these concealed enemies, should they dare to appear, than I am?—Besides, so well guarded as I shall be, there is little danger to be apprehended. It is true, my arm is now feeble; unceasing grief has enervated my frame; but the Count Guidoni,” continued the Marchese, smiling, “has undertaken to become my champion. I overheard your promise to my daughter, Count, and when we return, I will prove I am not ungrateful. I flatter myself I can reward your kindness agreeably. Come, come, Vivonio,” added Di Romanzini, “though I admire your filial anxiety, yet I have too long lamented your loss, to run the hazard of being deprived of you again; and,

and, as I feel perfectly convinced, that in you I embrace my long-lost son, prove that you are so, by your obedience, and desist these importunities, which can be of no avail. I repeat, that I believe myself secure from attack; but your presence might involve me in trouble. Dispose yourself therefore to remain at Orenza until my return, which, I hope, will be speedy; and remember, I solemnly charge you not to move, in the interim, beyond the precincts of the castle."

The conjecture the Marchese had expressed, of being exposed to danger, by the society of Vivonio, was attended by the success he expected, for his son now readily agreed to continue at Orenza; and Rosalia and the Countess immediately adopted the opinion, that the Marchese would undoubtedly be more tranquil and collected, while assured of Vivonio's safety, than he could possibly be, were his son to accompany him in a long and wearying journey,

journey, in which he might be exposed to the malice of his enemies.

The Duke, who had been silent during the importunities of Vivonio, and the discourse of the Marchese, now declared his approbation of the prudent determination of the latter, and expressed the most sanguine hopes of soon seeing a termination of their cares.

The Marchese, with his wonted considerative attention to the ease and tranquillity of the aged Duke di Orenza, requested Father Albertini to pass as much of his time at the castle, as he could possibly spare from his religious duties; and Vivonio begged to be admitted to share in the pleasing office of endeavouring to console the Duke, in the absence of the Marchese.

Unwilling to intrude on the retired and serious habits of the venerable Di Orenza, the Countess Alvanio proposed retiring with Rosalia and Josephine to the convent
of

of Santa Maria, until the return of the Marchese—a step which the Duke would, by no means, agree to. As Di Romanzini intended to visit Santa Clara before his departure, it was then settled that the Countess and her young friends, attended by the Count Guidoni and Vivonio, should accompany the former on the following morning to the convent.

After the adjustment of several other arrangements, an elegant supper was served, and, at an early hour, the party separated, the Marchese intending to commence his journey at the dawn.

At the approach of day, the attendants, who formed the suite of the Marchese, assembled in the principal hall, and in a few minutes the Marchese and his family made their appearance.

The venerable Duke, fearful of betraying any emotion, which might become general, bade the Marchese and Count Guidoni an hasty adieu, and the numerous party immediately set off for Santa Maria, where

where the Abbess, who was prepared for the visit, expected them to an early breakfast.

Santa Clara received the Marchese and his party with the liveliest satisfaction, and regarded Vivonio with sentiments of joy, mingled with surprise. His resemblance to the Marchese instantly attracted her notice, and she could scarcely forbear expressing a regret at Di Romanzini's being compelled to part from his long-lamented son, almost at the very moment of his restoration. The necessity of the step was, however, undeniable; and the Abbess endeavoured, by her pious and mild consolations, to reconcile Rosalia and Vivonio to the idea of separation from their revered parent.

Santa Clara beheld the Count Guidoni also with the highest approbation, and wondered not at the affection with which Rosalia regarded him. The extremely interesting urbanity of his manners, and the delicacy with which he endeavoured to
conceal

conceal the pain he felt, in bidding a short adieu to Rosalia, prepossessed the Abbess considerably in his favour; and she ardently wished the speedy return of the Marchese, that the happiness of the youthful pair might then be completed.

The fortitude with which Rosalia received the parting embrace of the Marchese, vanished as she beheld him and the Count Guidoni, followed by a long train of attendants, slowly winding through the valley. On the brow of a hill, they lingered, to take a farewell view of the turrets of the convent; and Rosalia distinguished the distant figures of the Marchese and Guidoni, long after the attendants had descended the steep. At length the Marchese proceeded on his way, and Guidoni slowly followed, still lingering to catch a glance of Rosalia, who, when her beloved father and the Count totally disappeared, could no longer restrain her tears.

The

The voice of Vivonio, in broken accents, entreating her to be composed, restored to Rosalia her recollection ; and looking up, she beheld so much anguish pictured in the features of her brother, that she immediately endeavoured to suppress her emotion, mentally reproaching herself for having yielded to feelings which she perceived had occasioned distress to Vivonio, who was already severely grieved at seeing the Marchese depart on such a journey, without his being permitted to partake the dangers and fatigue.

Vivonio perceived, with gratitude, the efforts which his sister made to restrain her griefs, and he strove, by every soothing attention, to revive her drooping spirits.

As Vivonio could on no account delay his return to Orenza, he promised to write the particulars of his early life, for the perusal of the Abbess ; and Rosalia being equally impatient to assist her
brother

brother in fulfilling the promise each had given the Marchese of paying every filial attention to the venerable Duke in his absence, they took an affectionate leave of Santa Clara, and, accompanied by the Countess and Josephine, returned to the castle.

CHAP. IX.

WHEN the Marchese arrived at Rome, he wrote a few lines to the Duke, to inform him of his being so far on his journey, and that he was in tolerable health and spirits. He repeated his caution to Vivonio, never to exceed the limits he had set him, and even then not to quit the castle unattended. The Marchese then spoke in the highest terms of the attentions he was hourly receiving from the Count Guidoni, and concluded with saying, they should sail on the morrow from Cevitta Vecchia for Nice.

On the voyage the Marchese was delayed,
by

by contrary winds, much longer than agreed with his patience: no other disagreeable circumstance, however, occurred on the passage; and when they landed at Nice, the Marchese found his health so much improved, that he only rested one day there, and then proceeded with the Count on their journey.

After quitting Saluzzo, and ascending that part of the Alps leading to the convent of San Jerome, the mind of the Marchese became absorbed in deep reflection. The interview he so anxiously desired was now approaching, and the long-concealed enemy of his peace on the point of being made known. With hurried steps he moved forward; but when he passed through the gloomy valley, so often trodden by the young Vivonio, his agitation became extreme, and, in ascending the steep flight of stone steps, he was compelled to lean on the arm of the Count for support.

The porter, on opening the convent gate,

immediately recognized the Count Guidoni, and, leaving the travellers to enter or not, as they pleased, he hastened to announce to the Abbot the arrival of this most unexpected guest.

Guidoni, following the porter, conducted the Marchese to the parlour of the Abbot, who happening not to be there, the man desired them to walk in, and added he would inform the Superior that his presence was required.

A few minutes had elapsed, when the door opened, and the Abbot appeared, to whom the Count immediately introduced the Marchese di Romanzini.

No language can describe the astonishment and horror that now marked the countenance of the Superior; he gazed for a moment on the Marchese, and then exclaimed—"Impossible!"

The Count and the Marchese regarded him with steadfast earnestness, persuaded that his apparent emotion was the effect of conscious guilt, certain of detection.

A short silence ensued, which the Marchese at length interrupted, by demanding of the Abbot, the cause of his being so evidently affected at sight of him? Instead of replying to the question of the Marchese, the Superior addressed himself to the Count, saying, in a tone of doubt—

“On your honour, Count Guidoni, do I *indeed* behold the Marchese di Romanzini?”

“Most assuredly you do, holy Father,” returned Guidoni, construing the Abbot’s incredulity into a fresh proof of terrified guilt.

The Superior now fixed his eyes on the Marchese, and examined him with scrutinizing attention.

Di Romanzini, displeased at the earnest gaze of the Abbot, requested him to banish all doubt, and to believe that he was really conversing with the Marchese di Romanzini.—“I beg, holy Father,” continued the Marchese, “that we may enter upon the business which occasioned me to

seek this interview. I have most important enquiries to make, and shall consider every moment an age, until I return to embrace a son, who has been too long estranged from my protection. You will do well to answer my enquiries immediately."

"Pardon me," said the Abbot, "I will return in a few minutes;" then hastily quitted the apartment.

The Marchese and Guidoni regarded each other with wonder.

The Superior quickly returned, carrying a small casket in one hand, and a packet of letters in the other. The latter he silently presented to the Marchese, who perceived they were addressed to the Abbot.

Di Romanzini opened the letter which lay uppermost. His hands trembled violently as he perused the contents. Half uttered exclamations of astonishment, terror, and indignation, hovered on his lips. In the most extreme agitation, he examined several others.

"Detest-

“Detestable forgery!” he loudly exclaimed, starting from the seat. “Who has done this?—Unveil this iniquitous plan, Father, or your holy Order will not protect you.”

“My Lord,” said the Abbot mildly, “I now but too well perceive that I have been the dupe of consummate artifice. Your identity I no longer doubt. *You are* the injured Di Romanzini—I will unfold every, the most minute particular, I am acquainted with, relative to this mysterious affair; but I fear they will afford you but little satisfaction. Yet before I commence the singular detail, allow me to display the contents of this casket.”

The Abbot opened the casket, and presented to the view of the Marchese the rich night-dress worn by the infant Vivonio, on the night of his disappearance, and a miniature picture of himself.

Di Romanzini gazed on the infantile habiliments and the portrait, with intense earnestness. At length he caught up the

picture, and touching a secret spring, discovered a likeness of the Marchese.

A deep sigh heaved his labouring breast, and turning to the Count Guidoni, he said—"This portrait was constantly worn by my ever-lamented Adelaide. Look, my friend—observe—by the appearance of the ribbon, it seems to have been torn with violence from her bosom. Oh, too surely, the murderer of my wife, and the villain who carried off my child, is the same person. Just Providence aid me to discover the vile assassin. How long has this casket been in your possession, Father?"

"A very short time, my Lord," replied the Abbot. "The letters, as you may perceive, I was in the habit of receiving occasionally. When you find yourself more composed, I will begin my relation. I wish, my Lord," added he, "I dare propose your taking some slight refreshment. I fear that the fatigue you have of late undergone, and the excessive emotion
you

you feel, will render you unable to support the disagreeable recital I am compelled to make."

The Count Guidoni, who was extremely shocked at beholding the pale looks and agitated demeanour of the Marchese, added his entreaties to those of the Abbot, and Di Romanzini was at length prevailed on to take a small quantity of wine. He then requested the Abbot to begin his relation. The Superior immediately complied.

"Between sixteen and seventeen years are past," said he, "when a stranger of genteel appearance demanded admission to the convent, at a late hour, and requested shelter for the night. His wishes were instantly complied with, and our frugal board was spread with additional viands, to welcome the weary traveller.

"This man was well informed, sensible, and peculiarly interesting in his manners. He discussed the political opinions of the times with judgment and moderation, and

his apparently firm attachment to our holy church soon won my full esteem.

“ When he arose to retire to his apartment, he requested to speak to me in private, and I accompanied him to the chamber where he was to sleep.

“ After having minutely examined the room, and convincing himself that he had nothing to fear from prying curiosity, he requested me to be seated, and drawing his chair close to mine, addressed me nearly to the following effect :—

‘ You have received me, holy Father,’ said he ‘ with cheerfulness and hospitality, as a way-worn traveller. I now inform you, that design, not accident, led me to this pious and secluded retreat. An affair of the utmost consequence demands your attention. You are at liberty to reject what I am going to propose ; but unheard of vengeance will pursue you, should you reveal what I am about to disclose.’

“ Amazed and horror-struck, I was on the point of rushing from the chamber, when
the

the stranger instantly arose and prevented me.

‘You need not thus attempt to fly, holy Father,’ said he, with an air of serious displeasure. ‘Do not erroneously suppose that I am going to propose any thing inconsistent with the purity of your mind and character. No: if you consent to my proposition, you will do an act of pious charity and justice. Should you refuse, I only require *silence* on the subject of my communications.’

“Restored to serenity by the calm air and ingenuous address of the stranger, I resumed my seat, and desired him to explain; partly promising to comply with his wishes, should his proposals meet my approbation.

‘As a proof of the confidence I place in you, I will, holy Father,’ said the stranger, ‘instantly reveal the cause of my troubling you thus; but first allow me to repeat—vengeance will most assuredly pursue a breach of secrecy.’

“The stranger paused a moment; but perceiving that I was not inclined to speak, he continued—

‘An Italian nobleman,’ said he, ‘between three and four years since, married a young lady of exquisite beauty, and exalted rank. She was his superior in both birth and fortune; and the happy bridegroom entertained not a doubt of the sincerity of his lovely bride’s affection for him.

‘In less than a year after their nuptials, the idolizing husband became the father of a lovely boy. The birth of this son increased the felicity of the apparent happy pair, who were almost proverbial for their virtues and mutual affection. But, alas!’ sighed the stranger, after a pause, ‘there is no permanent happiness in this life. A month has not yet elapsed, since the nobleman I now speak of, and his beautiful lady, were the admiration and delight of all who knew them. Oh! holy Father, how dreadful is the reverse!—The
Marchesa

Marchesa now lies in the silent tomb ; and the once happy husband is totally deranged in intellect !

“ The stranger spoke with uncommon agitation, the while a livid paleness overspread his countenance. I listened with fearful attention ; and the stranger, after glancing his eyes with a look of suspicious scrutiny around the apartment, resumed his discourse in a low voice.

‘ The Marchese and the Marchesa,’ said he, ‘ resided, during the last summer, at an elegant villa, not far from Naples. The lady seemed drawing nigh to the period of a second accouchement, and preparations for her expected confinement were making at the castle of the Marchese. A few days previous to that fixed on for their departure from the villa, the Marchese received an anonymous letter, the contents of which informed him, that his conubial felicity was imaginary, and referred him, for the truth of this assertion, to a letter inclosed in the epistle.

‘ You

‘ You may imagine, holy Father,’ continued the stranger, ‘ what were the sensations of the Marchese at this moment. With frantic haste he unfolded the enclosed paper, and soon became but too well assured of his misfortune.

‘ The enclosure was addressed to the Marchesa ; it contained the most passionate assurances of everlasting love, and the writer professed himself eager to obey her enchanting invitation. The lover then mournfully reproached the lady for having rejected his hand, from motives, he asserted, of unaccountable caprice, and of having cruelly banished him from the kingdom—‘ Charming Adelaide,’ the writer continued, ‘ did I not, in the dreadful hour of separation, warn you of our not being able to live divided from each other, by the sad distance you commanded ? After three years of agonizing absence, you now recall me—recall me to you and happiness !—Yes, I shall again behold !—Our child too—that pledge of our fond—our mutual affection, will,

will, for the first time, be gazed on by my anxious eyes. Adelaide ! Adelaide ! where was your love, your boasted affection, when you banished *me*—I, who possessed the most unquestionable right of calling you mine, to bestow yourself on one, whose birth and pretensions were scarcely superior to my own?

‘ Whence could you imbibe the idea that I should upbraid you for those proofs of tenderness, with which you rewarded my constancy, and consoled me for your positive rejection of my hand ? Your husband—hated name—he does not suspect. You say he caresses *our* lovely child, with all the fondness of parental love, and vainly imagines he sees his own image reflected in the face of *my* Vivonio.—Beware, Adelaide, a few days will bring me to your arms—How shall I tear myself away from both ?—Absence from you I must endure—Give me, then—give me my son—the lovely bond of Adelaide’s affection. I have another son, ’tis true, but he is not
the

the child of *her* whom I adore. Oh, wherefore did you force me from you?—my marriage—my execrated marriage, is another consequence of your severity, and——”

“ Unheard of artifice!—horrible calumny!” interrupted the Marchese, in a tone expressive of the keenest agony; “ and you gave implicit belief to this infamous fabrication?”

“ When you have heard the whole, my Lord,” returned the Abbot, “ you will be convinced that it was impossible to doubt it.”

“ What signature did the wretch say this vile letter bore?”

“ That I could not learn, my Lord. I did indeed make an enquiry to that effect, but the stranger refused to inform me.—Shall I proceed?”

The Marchese bowed assent, and the Superior continued—

“ There was nothing material in the remainder of the letter, except an assurance
from

from the writer, that he would meet the lady on a certain day, at a small temple, situated at the extremity of a grove in the grounds of the villa.

“ The stranger,” said the Abbot “ then resumed his detail to the following effect—

‘ The Marchese, after reading this letter, did not yield himself a prey to frantic jealousy. A cool and fixed determination of revenge took possession of his bosom—the situation of his lady alone prevented his putting his resolve into immediate execution. At this unhappy period, the Marchese distinguished me with his friendship; and though he succeeded in concealing the secret agitations of his mind from the Marchesa and her friends, yet it was impossible to deceive me. I took the liberty of hinting to him that I suspected he was unhappy; and with very little hesitation he revealed the cause, and shewed me the fatal letter.

‘ We then consulted on what was to be done. The Marchese still idolized his wife,

wife, and was a thousand times tempted to relinquish his plan of revenge; but a sense of his injured love and honour deterred him from yielding to the soft impulses of his heart. Apprised of the place and hour of assignation, the Marchese at length resolved to watch the arrival of this favoured lover, and to detect the guilty pair.

‘Should I discover that my wife is indeed faithless, you will then, my friend,’ said the Marchese, addressing me in a solemn tone, ‘you will then convey from my sight that wretched child. I wish not to imbrue my hands in the blood of the innocent; but I know not how far rage may transport me in the dreadful moment of conviction. Should that moment arrive, convey him—convey him instantly away, and let me never more behold him.’

‘ I promised to obey the instructions of the Marchese, and we soon after parted. I repaired to Naples, where I expected every day to hear from my friend ; but, alas !

alas! the first intelligence I received respecting the noble family, was, that the lovely Marchesa had been found dead in a small temple, and that the Marchese was in a state of mental derangement.

‘ This report assured me of the infidelity of the Marchesa, and I hastened to the villa, but was denied admittance. I soon found however that it was generally supposed, that the Marchesa had been wounded by assassins, and that excessive grief for the loss of her had deranged the Marchese. I further learned that the Marchesa, though the wounds she had received were pronounced mortal, did not expire before she gave birth to a daughter.

‘ The latter part of this intelligence cheered my mind, for as there was little doubt of the legitimacy of the female infant, I hoped she would yet console my friend for the loss of the faithless woman he adored.

‘ Apprehending that the young Vivonio might fall a sacrifice to the just vengeance
of

of the Marchese, I resolved to fulfil, with all possible dispatch, the injunctions I had received from the injured husband, and accordingly planned the removal of the unhappy child. I succeeded in the bold attempt, though not without alarming his female attendant. To terrify her to silence, I was compelled to present to her view a stiletto. In her struggles to keep the child, she very narrowly escaped being wounded, if she was not actually so. Indeed I have often been afraid that the poor faithful girl sustained some trifling hurt that night.

‘ Now, holy Father,’ continued the stranger, ‘ this outcast, desolate innocent—this helpless victim to his mother’s frailty, is in my possession. It was impossible to keep him in Naples, for his illustrious grandfather, and the confessor of the Marchese, unconscious of the injuries he sustained, have offered the most splendid rewards for the apprehension of the assassins who wounded the Marchesa, and afterwards

wards carried off the child. Though a stranger to the author of the lady's death, otherwise than by conjecture, yet as the removal of the child would, if discovered, have implicated me in that horrid transaction, I thought it expedient to fly with the young Vivonio, and yet was but barely in time to escape pursuit.'

"Struck with a sudden suspicion of the stranger's veracity," said the Abbot, "I observed to him, that the confessor of the Marchesa having exerted means to lead to the discovery of her murderers, appeared very singular, as he must have understood, from her confession in her last moments, whether she was innocent or guilty of the crime imputed to her; and likewise whether she received the wounds that caused her death, from the hand of her husband or that of an assassin.

'Alas ! holy Father,' replied the stranger, 'she expired before the holy man arrived at the villa.'

"I felt greatly shocked at the idea of the
unfor-

unfortunate lady having died without confession, and the benefit of the holy sacrament; and while contemplating this circumstance, my suspicions gradually vanished.

“ The stranger for some minutes regarded me attentively, at length he said—‘ I have already informed you, holy Father, that the hapless child is now under my care. Will you consent to take him under your protection?—You shall not find him a burden on your society. For the present I will amply provide for him, and when the Marchese recovers, I will endeavour to make him do something of consequence for the child.’

“ This assertion struck me as singular, and I asked the stranger, whether he really thought it likely that the injured Marchese would provide for the illegitimate offspring of his faithless lady ?

‘ The Marchese is the most generous of men,’ replied the stranger, ‘ and, as his honour will not permit him to reveal the
infidelity

infidelity of his wife, he will undoubtedly consider himself bound to make a provision for the unhappy child, who certainly cannot be charged with the crimes of his parents.'

"This mode of reasoning was far from satisfactory. I by no means entertained the same opinion as the stranger seemed to do, but having afforded credence to his tale, and my compassion being strongly excited for the poor child, I consented to receive him, and, in compliance with the condition proposed by the stranger, promised to observe an inviolable secrecy on the subject.

"These points gained, the countenance of the stranger became animated with the glow of extreme satisfaction, and he pressed my acceptance of a purse of ducats, and a diamond ring of great value: both these presents I resolutely refused, but stipulated for a small sum, for the maintenance of the child, as I could not intrude him on the society.

"The

“ The stranger, after repeated attempts to prevail on me to accept his liberal gifts, without success, suffered me to withdraw, promising, as I quitted the apartment, that he would bring the child on the morrow.

“ Early on the following morning the stranger departed, and I continued to expect his return during the day, though in vain.

“ Another day passed, and the stranger did not appear. The hours of evening had also flown, and the bell had just begun to ring for midnight prayers; the elements were in commotion, and the loud tempest howled through the valley, when suddenly the voice of a man was heard at the outer gate of the convent. The porter loudly demanded of the person what he wanted at that hour, but received no answer to his questions. Shortly after the plaintive voice of a child demanded admission. The gate was instantly opened, and a lovely boy, apparently between three and four years of age, entered.

“ The

“ The coarseness of his humble attire, for the child was disguised, and the rain that dropped from his curling locks on his rosy cheeks, could not obscure his extreme beauty ; and when he was led by the porter to the entrance of the chapel, in the long aisles of which the monks were then assembling, they gathered around, and regarded him with looks of admiration and pity.

“ The moment I beheld the beauteous child, I conjectured who he was ; and my heart ached as I gazed on this innocent victim to the vices of his parents.

“ The interesting child stood surrounded by the monks, who severally asked him numberless questions, all of which he answered with the most engaging sweetness, and infantile simplicity. Even at that early period of his life, the native gracefulness of his address was apparent. As he raised his tearful eyes to one of the brothers, who was then speaking to him, he caught a

view of Father Ansaldo, and instantly held out his little hands to him.

“ Father Ansaldo was a truly pious man. His virtues had long rendered him dear to the whole community. He instantly clasped the blooming child in his arms, and the tear of innate compassion trembled in his eye.

“ At that moment the monks were obliged to hasten to the chapel, and I requested Father Ansaldo to take the child to the refectory, and give it some food. The moment service was over, the monks again returned to their cells, and I hastened to the refectory, where I found the infant asleep, and folded in the compassionate arms of Ansaldo.

“ In this holy Father I had always placed the most implicit confidence, but my promise to the stranger prevented my communicating the secret I was now entrusted with.

“ The stranger had assured me, that in
his

his next visit he would instruct me how to account for taking the child under my protection; but as he had not appeared again, I was constrained to remain silent on that subject, and let the monks continue in the idea they now entertained, of the child being purposely exposed at the convent gate.

“ On the following morning, I received a packet, containing gold to a large amount, and an order to say that the child was an orphan, entrusted to my care by a friend, to whom his parents were once dear; and that the infant having been left at the gate, was entirely owing to the negligence of the man who had the charge of conducting him thither. The cavalier then excused himself to me for leaving the child as he had done, by expressing a dread of meeting with travellers at the convent, to whom he might be known.

“ These instructions I followed, and the monks implicitly believed the accounts I gave, and grew more and more attached to

the child, who, in return, regarded them with lively affection. In one thing only was he disobedient ; and that was, in maintaining an obstinate silence when addressed by the name of Lorenzo, a name the stranger had desired me to distinguish him by ; yet he seldom attempted to pronounce his own name ; and when he did, it was so imperfectly, that it required a prior knowledge of its full pronounciation to understand it. Father Ansaldo alone comprehended his meaning, and I was compelled to warn the good Father to observe a profound silence respecting this circumstance, and advised him to check the child, whenever he attempted to mention that name.

“ Father Ansaldo quickly perceived there was some mystery concerning this child, yet he never endeavoured to develop it, but contented himself with shewing a parental affection to his young pupil.

“ Three days more had glided away, and the stranger did not return. On the night of the third, however, and just as we were
sitting

sitting down to our frugal supper, he was announced by the name of Signor Martini.

“The stranger was again hospitably received, and, after supper, I attended him as before to the chamber, where he presented to me a letter, and another heavy purse of ducats.

“The letter, my Lord,” continued the Abbot, “was one of those which you have just perused. You may imagine I entertained a high opinion of the stranger’s veracity, when I read, in an epistle to which your signature was affixed, and which I reasonably concluded was written by your own hand, a full confirmation of all he had before related. That letter, you must have observed, my Lord, contained a strict charge to me, not to pay any attention to the feigned exertions you were then making for the recovery of the child, as they were merely intended to prevent the dishonour, which would attend a public acknowledgment of the infidelity of the late

Marchesa, and which acknowledgment, the birthright of your infant daughter would compel you to make, were the spurious offspring of an illicit amour to remain under your protection. The promise which then followed, of remitting a highly liberal allowance, for the support of the child, I considered as a noble proof of generosity and prudence.

“ As I now looked on myself as accountable to the stranger for the preservation of the secret confided to me, I was under the necessity of informing him, that the child had made known the name of Vivonio to the Father Ansaldo.

“ The stranger made a thousand enquiries respecting the good Father, and having formed an high opinion of him, from the answers I had returned, he gave me permission to acquaint Ansaldo with the story he had related ; and, on hearing that the Father had acquired great power over the mind of the child, he advised me to caution him to use his utmost diligence to

to obliterate from the infant mind of Lorenzo, all recollection he might retain of his real name and former condition.

“ The stranger then conjured me to be particularly careful, to observe that Ansaldo preserved, with fidelity, the secret reposed in his confidence, and having again obtained from me a solemn promise, that no particular, relative to the child, should transpire, he bade me adieu, and instead of sleeping at the convent, privately departed that night, since which time I have never beheld him.

“ Every year, from that period, I have been in the custom of receiving a noble annual portion, for the maintenance of Lorenzo, who, according to the express command of the stranger, and the order to the same effect in the letter, has ever been taught to consider himself as entirely dependant on my bounty.

“ For years all remained tranquil, and Lorenzo grew up, the admiration and delight of the whole community. Father

Ansaldo was affectionately attached to him, and he regarded the venerable man as the tenderest of parents; while I and the brothers unceasingly praised Heaven for granting us the power of training, in the paths of our holy religion, a youth, who promised to become one of its most worthy votaries.

“When Lorenzo had attained the age of twelve, a stranger came and settled in a small cottage, at a short distance from the convent. This man soon became an object of terror to the poor mountaineers; his singularly recluse habits, and severe manners, caused him to be universally shunned by the few peasants that inhabit the mountains in the vicinity. No person knew his name, and those who had once beheld him, were fearfully desirous of avoiding him. You may imagine, my Lord, how much I was shocked, when Father Ansaldo informed me, that his pupil, at first sight of this man, had recognised in him, the person who had torn him from his native home; till

till recollecting that the stranger had slightly intimated that on the night on which he carried off the child, he had employed the services of his valet on the occasion, I immediately conjectured that this man might be the servant he then spoke of; and, shortly after, I was convinced of this, by the man coming to the convent, and, in a private interview with me, acknowledging that he was the very person I had supposed him to be.

“ This man, whose name I then learned was Lopez Vanilla, informed me, that, at the desire of his master, who was now no more, he had entered into the service of the Marchese, who placed the highest confidence in him, and had, at his own desire, stationed him in the vicinity of the convent, to attend to the motions of Signor Lorenzo, who having arrived at an age, when an elopement from San Jerome might be apprehended, it was expedient for some person to be on the spot, who could more constantly follow his steps.

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than any of the monks might think it necessary to do, and who, by keeping a continual watch on him, might prevent the execution of such a design.

“ In vain I represented to this man, that Lorenzo had never shewn any particular dislike to his situation. Lopez continued fixed in his own opinion, and as I had no cause to dread an investigation of my conduct, I forbore endeavouring to produce an alteration in his sentiments, and he continued for years to watch the steps of my amiable charge.

“ About three or four months ago, this man was found dead in the valley that lays at the foot of the rocks, on which the convent stands. One of the brothers happening to be benighted, found him there a corse. When informed of this circumstance, I ordered his cottage to be searched, but nothing of consequence was discovered therein. His body was interred in the cemetery of the convent.

“ About two months after the death of
Lopez

López Vanilla, I received another letter; the contents of which informed me that the writer, whom I supposed to be the Marchese, imagined, from the long silence, that his faithful domestic, Lopez, was no more; and that he had formed an intention of visiting the convent himself, for the purpose of making some arrangements for the future. He then cautioned me not to receive any strangers during the ensuing fortnight, and concluded with a command to me, to be particularly careful of Lorenzo.

“ Two days after I received this letter, a stranger of noble appearance came late at night to the convent. He requested to speak to me in private, and I received him alone in the parlour. He obliquely introduced himself as the Marchese, and his conversation tended to assure me that he was really the personage he represented himself to be.

“ In this interview he strongly enforced the necessity of compelling Lorenzo to

take the vows; and severely blamed the indulgence I had ever shewn him. At length he departed, after having obtained from me a promise to use every endeavour to prevail on my young charge to enter the order speedily.

“ You have doubtless, my Lord, been informed by your son, that I gave him three months to deliberate on this subject. In the meanwhile he still enjoyed his usual liberty, and in his excursions he became acquainted with the Count Guidoni. To this acquaintance I was, for some time, a stranger; but the moment it became known to me, I invited the Count to the convent, hoping by that step to interrupt their intimacy. How ill I succeeded in the attempt, the event soon proved. The gracious and all-wise Protector of the oppressed, had directed that my precautions should only serve to aid the flight of the injured Lorenzo. Pardon me, my Lord, I have been so long accustomed to call your amiable son by that name, that I know not how to resign a
habit,

habit, which affords me so many pleasing reflections. Every noble—every engaging quality, I have for years attached to the name of Lorenzo. But to proceed—

“ On the night of your son’s escape, the stranger, who had so successfully assumed your name, came again to the convent, and, on hearing that he had not pronounced the vows, appeared extremely displeased, and blamed the delay with much severity. Finding me averse to enforcing his wishes, he threatened to withdraw our beloved Lorenzo from the convent; and had not the amiable youth so fortunately accomplished his escape that night, I am almost certain he would have been forced from my protection on the following day.

“ The pretended Marchese passed the night at the convent, and early on the next morning he joined me in the parlour. He had scarcely seated himself, when he desired me to summon Lorenzo, and in his presence to require from the youth a decisive answer.

“ Reluctantly I complied, and ordered

one of the brothers to inform Lorenzo that his attendance was requested.

“ For a considerable time we sat waiting his appearance. At length, astonished at his not obeying my summons, I was on the point of going in quest of him myself, when the monk re-entered the apartment. His countenance was expressive of amazement, and, in horrid accents, he informed me that neither Lorenzo nor the Count Guidoni were to be found in any part of the convent.

“ The impostor started from his chair; excess of rage now rendered him almost motionless. His face, in this visit, as in the former, was so much concealed by the cap and plume he wore, and his figure so enveloped in a long and dark cloak, which partly obscured the lower part of his countenance, that I could not observe the effect this intelligence produced, but by his convulsive start, and the fixed attitude which immediately followed.

“ He repeated the name of Guidoni several times, in a low inward tone; then suddenly

suddenly asked me how long the Count had been at the convent ?

“ I replied, about two or three days.

“ Why did you not inform me last night of his being here ?” he angrily demanded.

“ You were so much occupied by your own concerns, my Lord,” returned I, “ and so abruptly shortened the interview, that——”

“ Did Lorenzo ever see him before ?” interrupted he, with quickness.

“ To this question I replied, that he had often visited the Count at a cottage, where he lay some time ill.

“ Confusion !” muttered the deceiver.

“ This—this is the just reward of my pusillanimous humanity. *Remember, Father,*”

continued he, turning to me, and in a voice expressive of haughty vindictive malevolence, “ you, on whom I have profusely lavished the gifts of fortune, remember—either reclaim this wanderer with all possible speed, or dread the vengeance that will most certainly attend your perfidy.

Within three days I shall send to enquire
your

your success. If you find him, and that romantic Guidoni, suffer not the former to escape again, and detain the latter. Pay due regard to my orders, and your reward shall be beyond your most boundless expectations.'

"The pretended Marchese then rushed from the parlour, leaving me mute with astonishment. He had disappeared so suddenly, that I was for some minutes in doubt whether or no I had been under the influence of a distressing vision. The murmuring enquiries of the assembled monks at length recalled my recollection.

'Who is that stranger, who so hastily departed?—Has there been any treachery practised?—Where is our poor Lorenzo?' echoed from every side.

"To their repeated interrogatories, I could only reply, by asking questions in return; but all I could learn was, that Lorenzo had actually fled from the convent, and that the Count being also missing, was supposed to have accompanied him in his flight; but how the escape had been effected,

no one had been able to discover. The iron gate, adjoining to the vaults, had been found fastened as usual, and there was no other way by which it was possible for them to have quitted the convent unperceived.

“In the midst of this confusion, the porter informed me that a peasant desired to see me; and in the hope of his having some intelligence to communicate, respecting the young fugitive, I ordered him to be instantly admitted.

“This poor man had lately taken the cottage, formerly inhabited by Lopez Vanilla, and while digging, with an intention of making some alterations in the floor of his lowly hut, he found the casket which stands on the table.

“Concluding that it must have been the property of Lopez, and knowing that I had ordered all his effects to be conveyed to the convent, the honest peasant had now brought the casket, and resigned it to me unopened.

“When the man had departed, I examined the casket, and discovered the
indubi-

indubitable proofs it contains of the identity of your newly-recovered Vivonio.

“ The search for Lorenzo was quickly renewed by the monks ; but throughout the most secret recesses of the convent, no trace of the wanderer was to be found. As to sending off in pursuit of the fugitive, I had already determined to take no such step. The opinion I now began to entertain of the supposed Marchese, was by no means favourable ; and I ardently wished that the protection of the Count Guidoni might be sufficiently powerful to shield Lorenzo from the future attempts of the enraged Marchese.

“ From the hour in which we had the conversation I just now related, I have heard nothing more of that mysterious person—a point on which I have felt much anxiety, as I sincerely wish to refund the greater part of the wealth he has, at different times, lavished on the convent. His threats of vengeance I do not regard, for I depend on the protection of the Most High.”

The Abbot ceased, and a silence of some
minutes.

minutes ensued, during which the Marchese appeared absorbed in deep reflection.

“Describe to me,” said he, starting at length from his reverie, “the countenance and figure of the stranger, that delivered my son into your hands.”

“The business of Signor Martini with me was so singular,” returned the Superior, “that I took more notice of his person than I otherwise should have done. I perfectly recollect that he was an elegant young man; apparently not more than twenty years of age; his complexion was remarkably dark, but animated with the glow of health; his eyes black and intelligent; in short, his whole countenance was extremely handsome and expressive; his figure light, and his air graceful and spirited.”

The Marchese listened most attentively to this description; but after having mused some time, declared he had never known any person to whom it could be applied; nor was he more successful in the recognition of Lopez Vanilla, whom the Abbot described to him several times: the author
of

of his misfortunes was therefore still shielded from his just resentment, by the veil of impenetrable mystery.

The Marchese now requested to see Father Pedro, who was accordingly summoned, and, in the presence of the Superior, detailed the particulars of his meeting with Lopez, and the confession he made in his last moments.

The Abbot listened with less surprise than displeasure, at not having been informed by the Father, of the latter circumstance, which, had he disclosed at a more early period, would have revealed the iniquitous plot, and afforded just reason for securing the person of the pretended Marchese.

“Recollect, holy Father,” said the Count Guidoni, “that the dying wretch made it a most particular request, that you should not be spoken to on the subject; and it is very probable that his vile employer had artfully persuaded him into a belief of your being perfectly acquainted with the whole of the plot; therefore, to have mentioned the circumstance to you, would

would have been the means of preventing the restoration of Vivonio, an event which, it appears, the unhappy man, struck with a just sense of the enormities in which he had been an accomplice, was anxiously desirous should take place."

The Abbot admitted the justness of the Count's representations, and appeared to feel both resentment and regret at having been made the dupe of such unparalleled artifice and villainy.

"The extensive acquirements of my son, holy Father," observed the Marchese, "his excellent disposition and morals, fully prove your care and affection."

"Your approbation, my Lord, is highly gratifying," replied the Superior, "but I cannot presume to arrogate to myself a merit which I did not possess. It is true, I exerted my abilities in the education of your amiable son, with ardour and extreme satisfaction; but to the good Father Ansaldo he is chiefly indebted, for the high cultivation of his mental powers, and also for that graceful elegance of demeanour, which

so forcibly characterize him. Father Ansaldo was a man of high birth, profound erudition, and polished manners; disgusted with a world, whose vices he contemned, and whose follies he despised, he sought tranquillity in this calm retreat, resigning the empty parade of human grandeur, to devote himself to the service of the gracious Power, on whom he humbly depended for immortal happiness. The delight of Ansaldo was to dispense good, and the love he bore his young pupil, demonstrated itself in the unremitting attention he paid to perfect him in the acquirements he was so well calculated to instruct him in, and of which the grateful youth was so truly susceptible."

"Excellent man!" ejaculated the Marchese, "thou hast now reaped the rich reward of thy virtues. I shall ever cherish thy memory with reverential gratitude. Oh, holy Father," continued Di Romanzini, addressing the Superior, "with what devout thankfulness ought I ever to acknowledge the signal favour of Heaven, which

which permitted not the fell assassin to deprive my Vivonio of life, or to place him in some low and contemptible obscurity, where his virtues and talents would have found no fostering hand to rear either to perfection. This consideration ameliorates the severity of the disappointment I feel in not having discovered the atrocious wretches, by whose dreadful machinations years of my life have been clouded by sorrow. This, however, is no time for the indulgence of such painful retrospection; the happy recovery of a long-lost and amiable son, is a continual source of joy, and ought only to employ my thoughts. I will endeavour for the present to banish the recollections that tear my heart. The moment I reach Rome," added he, "I will inform his Holiness of the injuries I have sustained, and every method shall be pursued, to discover the calumniators of my sainted Adelaide."

The mention of his adored wife seemed to revive in the breast of Di Romanzini all the soul-rending anguish he had felt at her

prema-

premature dissolution; in vain he struggled with feelings so acute, and which now appeared almost to overcome him.

Guidoni, who, with a solicitude truly filial, had anxiously attended to every look of the Marchese, perceived his agitation, and hoping that rest would restore his tranquillity, earnestly entreated him to take some repose. The Marchese, in compliance with the united importunities of the Count and the Abbot, consented to retire for a few hours; but his impatience to quit the convent suffered him not to enjoy undisturbed slumbers, and he soon quitted his couch to seek another interview with the Superior.

The Father Abbot, though not entirely recovered from the astonishment and uneasiness which had overwhelmed him on the first introduction of the Marchese, was not unmindful of the accommodation of his noble guests, and when the Marchese left his chamber, the Abbot immediately hastened to conduct him to the parlour, where an elegant collation was soon after served.

Unwil-

Unwilling to hurt the feelings of the Superior, the Marchese slightly partook of the repast ; but his mind was too much occupied with endeavours to conjecture who his mysterious enemy could possibly be, to allow him to relish the choice viands which the table displayed. The agitation of Guidoni, on this subject, was little inferior to that of his revered friend, and he awaited, as impatiently as the Marchese, a proper opportunity of further discourse with the Abbot.

At length the moment, so ardently desired, arrived, and the Marchese, resuming the subject of the foregoing interview, requested the Superior to inform him why he had never addressed any letter to him ?

“ If you will take the trouble, my Lord, of again perusing one of the letters I received,” returned the Abbot, “ you will therein find, that I was charged in the most solemn manner never to write, and to remain, assured, that remittances would be regularly sent to San Jerome. In case of the death of the child, this prohibition was to be

taken off, and I should then have been at liberty to address a few lines to Signor Martini; but even in this instance, such were the precautions to be used, that the letter was to have been left at the post-office, until claimed by the Signor himself."

The Marchese then proceeded to make several other enquiries, but as the answers of the Abbot no ways tended to illucidate the mystery in which the black transactions of years was so deeply involved, the former was obliged to content himself with the hope that time would yet draw aside the veil that still continued to conceal his most inveterate foe; and the conversation soon turned on the early pursuits of Vivonio.

The Marchese listened to the just praises which the Superior bestowed on his son, with all the eagerness of paternal love; and forgetting the easy credulity of the Abbot, whose plain and simple recital, together with the written evidences he had adduced, in support of his veracity, had completely banished the suspicions, which
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before had attached to his conduct, Di Romanzini now regarded him only as the kind protector and instructor of his Vivonio; nor was the unfavourable opinion entertained of him by the Count Guidoni, less effectually changed by the same means.

The day was rapidly drawing to a close, and the Marchese began to talk of departing; but as travelling in that part of the Alps at a late hour was dangerous, he was prevailed on by the Abbot, to delay his departure till the following morning.

The evening being serene and beautiful, the Marchese, accompanied by the Count Guidoni and the Abbot, proceeded to take a survey of the convent, the chapel, and the gardens. While moving slowly through the cloisters, they were joined by several of the elder monks; and as each circumstance that related to the reputed orphan Lorenzo had already spread through the whole community, these venerable Fathers, to prove the affectionate recollections they retained of the amiable youth, were happy to point out to the Marchese, as they pro-

ceeded on their walk, those spots which were once the favourite resorts of Vivonio. A moss-grown excavation in the rock, half concealed by the shadowing arch, and wild perennial shrubs, formed a pleasing recess, to which the attention of the Marchese was now directed. Here, he was informed, the youthful Vivonio had often listened to the pious precepts, and the mild instructions of the virtuous Father Ansaldo ; and in which, after the decease of the holy man, his sorrowing pupil had passed many a sad and solitary hour. The verdant turf that spread before the entrance, exhibited a profusion of wild flowers and healing herbs, transplanted from their former soil by the hand of the mourning youth, and taught to adorn this sacred retreat, in remembrance of the virtues and humanity of the venerable recluse, who had loved, at the silent hour of eve, to linger in the shadowy recess, and lead the ardent imagination of his pupil to the contemplation of worlds unknown : and as he oft explained the astro-nomic page, taught the heart of the artless youth

youth to adore the great Divinity, whose omnipresence is evident to the remotest confines of the globe. To trace the finger of the universal Architect, in the formation and productions of the earth—to gaze on His path, through the celestial spheres, early became the soul-elevating employment of Vivonio, while the purest principles of religion formed the foundation of his virtues, and his erudition.

It is not in the power of language to convey a just idea of the feelings of Di Romanzini, as the venerable Fathers, in animated terms, recorded the virtues of the regretted Ansaldo, and with no less fervour, dwelt on the early display of goodness in his young pupil.

An emotion of devout gratitude to the All-wise, swelled the bosom of the Marchese, and he no more regretted the long estrangement of that dear son, who, instead of being nurtured in the bosom of fond parental indulgence, the luxuries of unbounded wealth, and the seducing allurements of the world, had flourished like
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the flower in the sequestered glade, cherished by the Universal Parent!

Soft and consoling to the heart are the sweet effects of resignation, and submission to the divine will! The Marchese now fully experienced these soothing effects; and, after having visited each loved haunt of his Vivonio, retired to repose, with a mind tranquillized by pious reflections, and entirely divested of the painful inquietude that had agitated his breast in the morning.

The Count Guidoni, whose comprehensive mind taught him to sympathize with ardour in the virtuous feelings of the Marchese, and to glory in the noble qualities of his friend Vivonio, beheld the serenity of the former with unfeigned joy; and the fond flattering anticipation of future happiness yielded, in the still hour of night, those sweet reflections that amply compensated him for the absence of sleep.

Rosalia—the adored Rosalia, was ever present to the faithful imagination of Guidoni; and his heart sometimes whispered that

that she had received him on his arrival at Orenza, with a sweet emotion, the remembrance of which cherished hope in his doubting bosom. The Marchese too had encouraged him to credit the transporting vision. He had promised to reward the friendship shewn to Vivonio. Did he mean to bestow the hand of Rosalia on him? What had he done to merit such a reward—such a reward as Rosalia? The idea was rapture—might he dare to indulge it. The timid sigh of incertitude frequently obtruded itself; but the bright perspective was too enchanting to permit the Count to relinquish it, without feeling the keenest agony in the attempt; and he found at length that he could not tear himself from the fond indulgence, of contemplating the vivid picture of transcendant happiness his busy fancy had drawn.

Early on the following morning, the Marchese, the Count, and their suite, bade a friendly adieu to the Superior and the brotherhood of San Jerome, and set off on their return to Orenza.

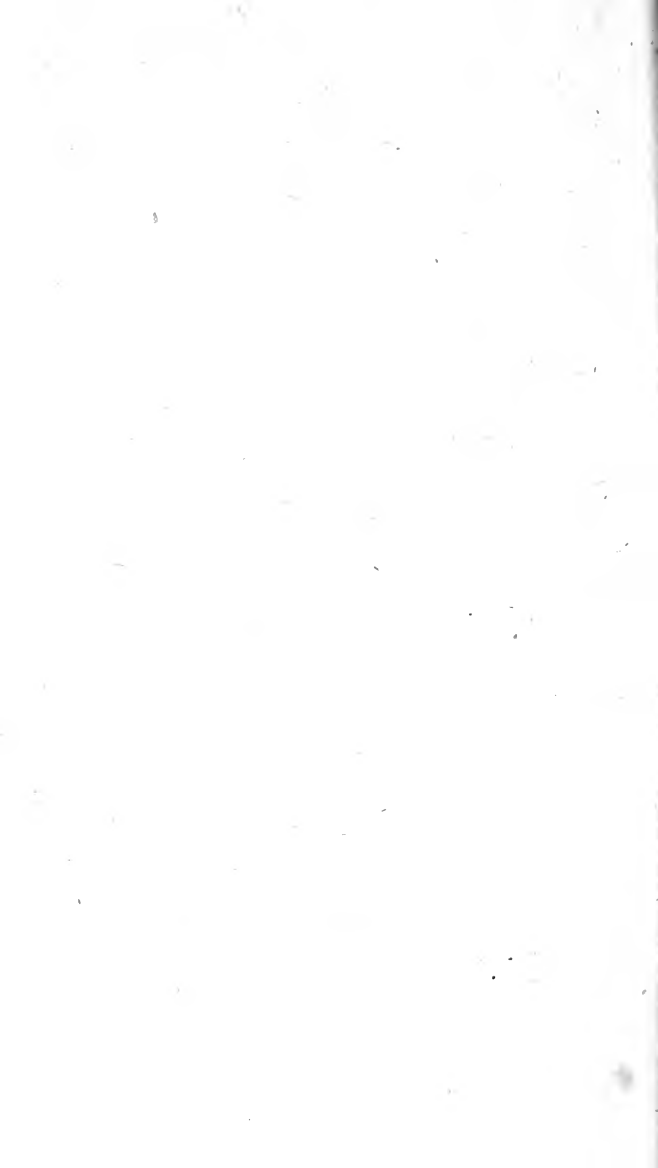
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The Marchese had not omitted to bring from the convent, the casket containing the infant dress of Vivonio, and also the letters written by the person who had assumed his name, and respecting whom the Abbot had repeatedly affirmed, should he gain any farther knowledge or information, he would dispatch messengers to Orenza with the intelligence.

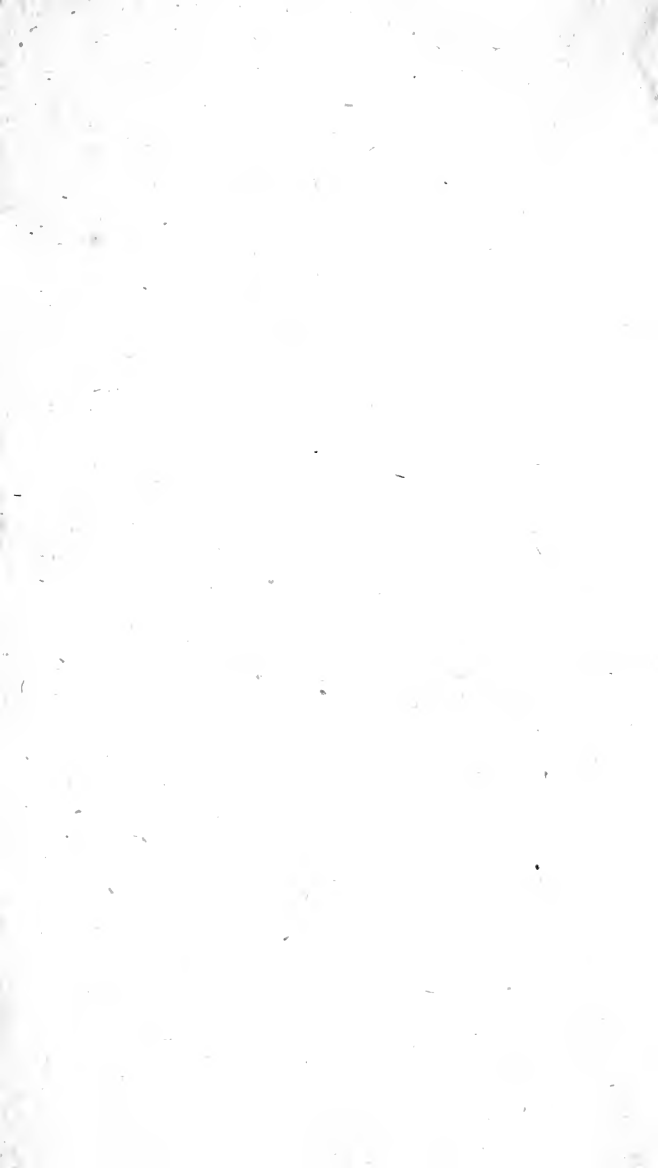
The Padre Abbot had proposed to the Marchese to remain at the convent till the monk should have made some search among the rocks, for the treasure mentioned by the dying Lopez ; but as the Marchese was already possessed of sufficient testimony of his son's identity, he would not delay his journey.

END OF VOL. II.









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